**THE REPLICATING ACT OF INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS: THREE PATHS TO EXAMINING THE COMMITMENT TO PROTECT SURVIVORS OF ECONOMIC ABUSE**

**Abstract**

In Israel, economic abuse survivors – women whose partners have blocked their access to their own economic resources – seek help from three state welfare organizations: the National Insurance Institute, the welfare services, including violence prevention centers, and family courts’ assistance units. Recently, a unique opportunity has arisen to investigate these organizations’ employees’ commitment toward such victims, with the issues of economic abuse and policies concerning women’s right to support receiving increased public attention. While responsive changes in the organizations’ routine actions have become possible, patriarchal priorities continue to reinforce routine actions that do not recognize state of emergency economic abuse survivors face or their right to support. The institutional logics perspective is particularly suitable for analyzing employees’ commitment to economic abuse survivors and their positioning processes regarding survivors’ need for support. Analyzing 48 structured interviews designed to identify the institutional logic guiding the employees’ commitment by examining sources of authority, occupational identity, sources of legitimacy, and the normative base, indicates three ways organizational practices reflect how a patriarchal institutional logic are replicated. Additionally, the analysis reveals a typology of challenging processes embodying various levels of distancing from replication that reflects the difficulty involved in developing the commitment to economic abuse survivors.

**Keywords: institutional logics, economic abuse, welfare institutions, gender**

**INTRODUCTION**

Economic abuse is defined as the behavior of an intimate partner who controls his partner and prevents her from using and managing her own as well as the joint financial resources, including preventing her from pursuing education or employment (Adams et al. 2008). While awareness regarding the phenomenon has risen in Israel and around the world, economic abuse is not included in the Domestic Violence Prevention Act of 1991. Thus, Israel is identified with a complex patriarchal approach. While the state has formally adopted a committed to protecting women, on the practical level, this commitment is limited in three ways. First, the extent to which the rights of intimate partner abuse survivors are exercised remains limited (Yasour Borochovitch, Benjamin & Renan Barzilay 2021). Second, budgets allocated to the Ministry of Welfare earmarked for intimate partner abuse programs are sometimes returned to the Treasury, having not been utilized; moreover, the programs do not rescue economic abuse victims from financial dependence (Oxenberg 2020). Third, patriarchal priorities effectively preserve the hegemonic masculine norms, which include the husband’s role as provider and economic leader (Renan Barzilay & Youseri 2016).

This complexity, and the increase in awareness of the nature of economic abuse and its long-term implications on women’s lives, creates an opportunity to examine how this complexity is reflected in state’s welfare organizations’ activities. These include the National Insurance Institute (NII), social services, including violence prevention centers, and family court assistance units used during divorce proceedings. The question arises whether these welfare organizations’ employees’ commitment to meet the needs of economic abuse survivors increases as the organizations become more aware of the nature of economic abuse. We seek to understand the welfare authorities’ treatment of economic abuse survivors as an expression of the encounter between the institutional logic characteristics of each welfare organization and the patriarchal institutional logic, and to examine the commitment of the welfare organizations’ employees towards the survivors’ right to recognition and rehabilitation.

The institutional logics perspective emerges as particularly relevant when focusing on welfare organization employees, whose level of commitment is likely to be significant in making solutions accessible to economic abuse survivors. According to Thornton, Ocasio and Lounsbury (2012), institutional logic is the aggregate of sources from which social actors in organizations draw their commitments and guidelines for action. It informs their ability to endow a situation with meaning and experience it as logical, and provides the vocabulary and justifications they use along with their identity or self-perception. Institutional logic constitutes the totality of principles, practices, and symbols of the institutional order that is acceptable and beneficial to the social actors, differentially shaping how conclusions, thinking processes, considerations, and deliberations unfold. In short, institutional logic outlines how rationality is perceived and experienced within the institution. The relevance of the institutional logic perspective to understanding the actions of welfare organizations is rooted in its contribution to explaining the normative, ethical, and moral context in which organizational loyalty and the commitment to those turning to the organization for support grows and develops. Furthermore, the term “embedded agency” (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury 2012, 79) can potentially map the tension between replicating or challenging the organizational action, which respectively diminishes or amplifies, the significance of information regarding economic abuse. This can be accomplished by addressing four dimensions of institutional logic: sources of authority, occupational identity, sources of legitimacy, and the normative base (Toubiana & Zietsma 2017). According to this approach, both loyalty to organizational routines and the level of commitment to those seeking support are embedded in the identities of individuals as much as they are embedded in the system of organizational guidelines constraining the individuals’ agency (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury 2012). Until recently, research in the field investigated replicating behaviors rather than challenging behaviors without addressing the possibility that “embedded agency” was shaping the level of distancing from replication available to those acting within organizations, as expressed in challenging actions. Implementing the institutional logics approach to investigate the growth of the employees’ commitment to the women seeking their support, when this commitment is not part of the organizational practice, enables us to analyze various types of challenging actions. These are expected to emerge from the analysis of encounters between welfare organization employees and women turning to them for help, while accounting for occupational identities and identification with trends of social change. The responses of those whose agency is embedded in specific welfare organizations may answer the question of whether a woman who is not exposed to physical violence can nevertheless be recognized as eligible to receive the range of solutions provided to victims of intimate partner abuse as well as unique solutions tailored to her rehabilitation requirements.

**ECONOMIC ABUSE**

Economic abuse in intimate partner relationships is gendered and generally inflicted upon the woman (Renan Barzilay 2017). Researchers propose assessing three aspects of the phenomenon. The first addresses economic supervision as representing men’s tendency to supervise and restrict women’s ability to freely use family resources. The second focuses on economic exploitation as reflecting these men’s tendency to create debts and damage their partner’s credit rating. The third refers to men economically blocking their partners by thwarting employment opportunities or opportunities these women have to establish themselves and advance in their work (Stylianou, Postmus & McMahon 2013). All three include a dimension of coercive control (Stark 2007), which distinguishes economic abuse from the normative male commitment to assume the role of the “good provider.” However, blurring the distinction between the two is still common in professional discourses, and the legal system’s marginal treatment of non-physical abuse strengthens this (Renan Barzilay 2017). A recent study found that the aspect of coercive control in the context of economic abuse also includes the intention to take control over resources by isolating the partner and undermining her knowledge and ability to manage financially (Duron et al. 2020). Therefore, social support and accompaniment in dealing with financial institutions are central to rehabilitating economic abuse survivors (Schrag, Ravi & Robinson 2020).

The literature on the state’s response to economic abuse indicates a gap between absent or partial legislation addressing economic abuse (Renan Barzilay 2017) and awareness of the difficult economic crises economic abuse survivors face and the understanding that they require a multidimensional rehabilitation process (Weissman 2020). Such a gap exists also in Israel, whose Domestic Violence Prevention Act of 1991 recognizes women’s right to protection from intimate partner abuse but does not recognize economic abuse as intimate partner abuse. Therefore, for a survivor of intimate partner abuse to receive welfare support, even if not rehabilitative or specifically tailored to her situation, she must be recognized as a survivor of domestic abuse. Thus, the question arises as to whether welfare organization employees representing the state in fulfilling its declared commitment to protect survivors of intimate partner abuse connect to a personal commitment enabling them to recognize women who have not been exposed to physical abuse as abuse survivors. Such recognition would establish these women’s eligibility to receive the range of solutions provided to survivors of intimate partner abuse as well as solutions specifically tailored to their rehabilitative needs.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Act of 1991 obligates welfare organization employees to identify cases of intimate partner abuse and offer survivors the possibility of staying in a women’s shelter, even when this does not suit the survivor’s life circumstances. In this way, the law replicates a patriarchal approach: the commitment to providing protection is not accompanied by an explicit commitment to free these women from dependency on their abusive partners. Furthermore, the law makes no reference to economic abuse or coerced debt (Adams, Littwin & Javorka 2020). In this context, the possibility that the welfare organization employees’ commitment to economic abuse survivors will develop into a challenging act is shaped by the encounter between the employees’ social identities and feminist activism in Israel, which as in other countries, demands recognizing economic abuse survivors’ right to rehabilitation of their economic functioning. We are applying the institutional logics perspective to deepen our understanding of the possibility of such a commitment emerging.

**INSTITUTIONAL LOGICS IN ORGANIZATIONS NOURISHING THE COMMITMENT TO REPLICATE OR CHALLENGE ORGANIZATIONAL ROUTINES**

Organizational practices and employee identities shape organizational loyalty and the commitment to those turning to the organization for support. Both practices and identities are shaped by institutional logics. Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury (2012) claim that when there is a need to understand how to act in a concrete empirical space as part of organizational processes, it is appropriate to ask in the context of what institutional logics this understanding evolves. That is, which sources provide the context from which social actors in an organization draw their commitments and guidelines for action? In what ways do they experience their actions as logical? What justifications do they use and what self-perception do they maintain in relation to their actions? It cannot be assumed that actions reflect a dogmatic institutional logic, and in change processes, the actions may even contribute to the emergence of a new institutional logic. Nevertheless, the rationality, justifications, and sources of authority shaped by institutional logics are critical to action (ibid., 129). As the actions taken by those working within the same organization are not uniform, the institutional logics approach was developed to investigate clashes between them (Friedland &Alford 1991). The existence of multiple logics indicates that in the same professional field, there are multiple courses of action that are considered rational, as Mayer and Rowan have already claimed (1977). As part of the process of developing an institutional logic, organizations legitimize their actions by developing formal practices considered rational with respect to their core occupations. The action templates considered rational regarding core occupations nourish the development of institutional logics. However, as Abbott (1980) has shown, conflict between professional groups within the same occupation creates divisions and struggles over authority. Hence, the development of occupations through action plans that are considered rational are central to institutional logics and emerge as dominant guidelines in shaping the organization’s action as well as its sources of authority and legitimacy. The advantage gained by adopting the institutional logics perspective is its emphasis on embedded agency, that is, on understanding the difficulty experienced by actors in an organization with respect to challenging it and distancing themselves from the commitment to replicate its routine acts. Despite this emphasis, until recently, the degree to which challenging acts were distanced from replicating acts had not been articulated as an expression of the level of commitment employees had to the organization versus their identification with intra- or extra-organizational trends challenging it. Rather than examining the possibility that embedded agency limits the degree of distancing from replication, emphasis has been placed on replication as being reinforced by principles accessible to the organizational actors that become guidelines and points of departure which they can further develop as expressions of loyalty to the organization and its goals. According to Thronton and Ocasio (2008), institutional logics are the “historical templates of socially structured material practices which the actors in the organization use to organize their time and space in order to experience their work as meaningful and aligned with the values, their beliefs, and the organizational regulations to which they are subject” (ibid., 101). Based on this definition, what makes the comparison of distinct institutional logics analytically fruitful is the possibility of comparing how actors in specific organizations understand daily situations and the meaning they ascribe to their routine actions. When the routine act is perceived as rational, distancing from the commitment to replicate it to the point of performing a challenging act is no simple matter. Therefore, we can expect to encounter various levels of distancing from the institutional logic, which has become established through political, cultural, and social processes. The institutional logic adopted by a specific organization expresses how it perceives its goals, rationales, and professional operating methods. Examining it enables us to map the relationship between the individuals acting in the organization and the social space itself, so as to demonstrate how individuals operate within the space created by the encounter between professional principles.

The emphasis on the contribution of individuals to replicating or challenging acceptable organizational practices inspired Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury (2012) to examine embedded agency within the context of institutional logic and, therefore, as being shaped by the totality of components shaping the institutional logic itself. To understand this process, the researchers propose a theory focusing on the actions of individuals in light of opportunities created by the existence of many institutional logics within their organizations. The theory assumes that human behavior develops within a situation and is limited and directed by its attributes; individuals’ courses of action are limited and therefore organizational practices tend to be preserved more than they tend to be challenged. Furthermore, organizational practices can only be challenged when the individuals’ identities and goals and the cognitive schemes they have developed enable them to hone their commitments and defend them based on what researchers refer to as “bounded intentionality.” Essentially, while actors in the organization aim to achieve their goals, their ability to act is bound by the mindset prevalent within the organization.

The literature proposes comparing various institutions based on their institutional logics by focusing on four primary aspects: sources of authority, occupational identity, sources of legitimacy, and the normative base (Toubiana & Zietsma 2017), each drawing from the cultural-social context and from developments in the specific occupational space. Sources of authority refer to the employees’ perceptions of the organization’s role. Occupational identity denotes how they position themselves professionally in relation to clashes between occupational approaches and their professional status. Sources of legitimacy indicates the types of justification employees give for their actions, and finally, the normative base focuses on the questions of when an act is experienced as appropriate in relation to the individual’s professional status, considering the type of request and the needs of the person seeking support, and when it is experienced as moral. Attrash-Najjar and Strier (2020) recently discussed the normative base, highlighting processes in which moral stances are learned from those higher in the organizational hierarchy. According to Sacks (1989), who focuses on identifying the moral self, an individual’s professional moral stance exists alongside an internalized code specifying what it means to be a worthy member of a specific social category. The connection between these two approaches allows us to extract the normative dimension of the institutional logic.

**WELFARE INSTITUTIONS IN ISRAEL**

The post-neoliberal change in public policy in Israel is characterized by a withdrawal of the state from its willingness to finance formal support organizations beyond the minimum, leading to a debate among various social forces and ideological stances (Maron & Shalev 2017). Neoliberalism is defined as a policy that implements competitive markets in all spheres, including economics, politics, and society (Birch 2015, 572). The welfare state, including its assistance practices and material aid, have become a focus of social and political polarization, pitting supporters of its continued existence and development against those denouncing and seeking to marginalize it (Doron 2014).

**The National Insurance Institute**

The National Insurance Institute (NII), established in 1954 to ensure the social security of the population in Israel, underwent important changes in its first 20 years of operation, leading to large-scale developments in its scope of activity. For example, its entry into new fields (unemployment, disability, and healthcare) expanded the range of treatment it offered and its authority as a social institution. By providing additional types of insurance, increasing the retirement level, and liberalizing eligibility conditions for insureds, the NII has become a body responsible for supplementing and guaranteeing income based on socialist principles of narrowing socioeconomic gaps and expanding the net of services offered to insureds (Nitzan 2014). Today, the NII provides financial assistance with pregnancies, childbirth and children, disability, illness and termination of employment, guaranteed minimal income, and retirement, based on procedures for determining eligibility.

The welfare state’s prevailing principle of universality, which refers to including all population groups in its framework of activity and offering expanded protection, is what shifted the issue of national insurance from the margins to the center of Israel’s social policy. The demand for selectivity, which has grown since the Budget Arrangements Law of 2003, is built on a principle contrary to that of excluding groups of people from receiving benefits. The exclusionary principle aims to weaken the principle of universality, marginalize the issue of national insurance, and decrease the commitment of the general public to the entire population, limiting responsibility exclusively to underprivileged groups (Doron 2014). A recent study found that the NII conducts eligibility tests in a way that reflects a skeptical stance towards those seeking support, assuming that they are not eligible to receive the assistance they are asking for, while at the same time strengthening its insistence on their commitment to the public exercising its rights (Yasour Borochovitch, Benjamin & Renan Barzilay 2021).

**The Social Services Division and Violence Prevention Centers**

The Ministry of Labor, Welfare, and Social Services serves as a central link in the Israeli welfare state and manages a system of services catering to a diverse range of target audiences. Over the years, the social work profession has undergone a process of professionalization, expressed in social workers’ improved level of training, progress made in research in the field, and the diversification of fields of practice (Paz-Fuchs & Schlossberg 2012). The profession’s rising status in Israel over the years is due, among other things, to the therapeutic clinical perspective it has taken on. Accordingly, as different needs of the population became identified, various fields of specialty and occupational frameworks developed, such as healthcare and mental health services, employment placement services, community courts, and more (Shapiro et al. 2002).

In 1991, the Domestic Violence Prevention Act was enacted, establishing the state’s responsibility for providing relief to domestic abuse survivors. A year later saw the enactment of the Basic Law: Human Dignity and Liberty, stipulating that “All persons are entitled to protection of their life, their body, and their dignity.” These two laws inspired the commitment to develop services and knowledge aimed at preventing and ending abuse, and this was expressed in the guidelines of the Social Work Regulations. Following these legislative acts, domestic violence prevention centers were established, with 108 centers currently operating throughout Israel. They provide solutions ranging from diagnosis, danger level assessment, protection measures creation, and treatment and rehabilitation of families caught in the cycle of abuse, offering support to both victims and perpetrators (Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, and Social Services, 2020). Krigel and Peled (2016) show that these centers’ activities take place alongside those of civil society organizations, such as Ruach Nashit (*Women’s Spirit).*

**The Assistance Units**

The assistance units near the family courts were established in 1997 under the Family Court Act of 1995, first as entities to assist the courts in handling civil aspects of family disputes. Initially, these units were meant to assist the judges and the families embroiled in family court litigation by integrating therapeutic and emotional elements into the legal proceedings, based on the assumption that family disputes have long- and short-term emotional and social implications for the parties and their children, which continue even after the disputes have ended (Inbar, Nevo & Lehman, 2008). Later, assistance units were set up near the religious courts, and the Law for Settling Litigation in Family Disputes was enacted, naming the assistance units as the first mandatory stage in family disputes, even before turning to a tribunal. In fact, prior to filing a claim, a Motion to Resolve a Dispute must be submitted to the assistance unit, where four mandatory MAHUT (Hebrew acronym for information, assessment, and coordination) sessions are conducted by the unit’s employees with both partners. The units are meant to explain the legal proceedings to the parties, prepare their expectations regarding it, and refer them to community-based mediation procedures, with the primary mission of bringing the parties to a quick and consensual resolution of the family dispute (Bayer-Topilsky, Manor & Szabo-Lael, 2015).

In Israel, assistance units are currently operating throughout the country alongside family, rabbinical, and sharia courts (Bayer-Topilsky, Manor & Szabo-Lael, 2015). One field family courts deal with is that of domestic violence. Assistance units, which assess, intervene, and assist during family crises, do not treat violence. The intervention assumption is based on the approach that many cases call for urgent and immediate intervention involving special treatment that might ease the tension between the parties and help them reach an agreement, including with regard to temporary visitation arrangements, seeking therapy, or separating. In high-risk situations, the speed of response is highly important in terms of assessing the situation, coordinating the logistics, and referring the women to the welfare services (women’s shelters and violence prevention and treatment centers) (Inbar, Nevo & Lehman, 2008).

The current study examines the commitment of employees in these three welfare organizations to support and protect survivors of economic abuse as reflecting two opposite directions. One involves diminishing the significance of information regarding economic abuse and avoiding addressing the survivors’ rehabilitation needs and right to be recognized as eligible for protection from domestic violence. This direction was investigated in order to deepen the discussion regarding the support offered to victims of economic abuse (Schrag, Ravi & Robinson 2020). The second possibility we investigated was that the welfare organization employees are committed to survivors of economic abuse and act to expand the significance of the information regarding economic abuse the women turning to them for help receive in order to strengthen their eligibility to receive support resources. Investigating this possibility allowed us to address the literature dealing with the institutional logics perspective while qualifying the accepted distinction between preservation acts and challenging acts (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury 2012). It also allowed us to examine the possibility that there is a range of challenging acts at various levels of distancing from existing organizational practices. We will now present the research design.

**METHODOLOGY**

We used structured interviews to interview 48 employees in three state welfare organizations. These included 21 clerks and managers at the NII, 21 social workers in the social services division and violence prevention centers, and six social workers, lawyers, and mangers from the assistance units operating near the family courts. The interviewees ranged from 25–55 years of age and were diverse in terms of their seniority and position within the organizational hierarchy, including clerks, social workers treating the families, and managers from various fields and divisions. No distinction was made between the interviewees’ roles, based on the understanding that the process of approaching a specific welfare organization develops gradually, as the individual seeking help is referred from one role holder to another. Given that our purpose was to investigate the logics according to which the organization generally provides assistance, we examined the perspectives of the employees who first meet the women requiring assistance and the managers the women approach themselves or are referred to by the employee first meeting them and seeking guidance. The interviewees were all native Israelis – Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jewish women and a minority of Arab women. Their education and training varied according to their professional roles. Their level of religiosity was diverse, ranging from secular through traditional to religious, although most were secular and none were from the ultra-Orthodox sector. Most interviewees had a family and some were married or divorced. We approached them after obtaining approval from the appropriate authorities and based on the recommendations of their supervisors or others we had already interviewed. The interviews were conducted prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis and were presented to the interviewees as being conducted as part of a study on their work with survivors of intimate partner abuse.

**The Interview Structure**

The interviews dealt with mapping the information sources: the professional sources, those regarding gender violence in general, and those regarding economic abuse in particular. We investigated the working approach, the image of the customer, and the decision-making processes. The analysis was conducted based on Silverman’s proposed method of content analysis (Silverman 1993), which exposes the positioning of the speakers’ identity in order to uncover the premises through which the structuring of the employees’ responsibility and commitment to the organization, their role within it and to the women seeking help can be interpreted. The findings section includes quotes that support our arguments, identified only by initials that do not represent the interviewees’ names. The advantage Silverman’s content analysis method offers is the possibility of mapping premises, categories, classifications, and institutional logics that may be important within the context of “what everyone knows,” which refers to descriptions that relate to institutional cooperation, institutional silencing, and institutional ambiguity.

We applied this method to extract the institutional logics and their justifications by examining the interviewees’ rhetorical dialogue with the premises, terms, classifications, and practices originating from the broad institutional discourses. This was accomplished mainly through “moral stories” that allowed us to interpret the employees’ commitment as reflected in how they position themselves as being morally and professionally responsible. We adopted Silverman’s premise according to which the interviewees’ stories were “local achievements” from which we could learn about acts they experienced as being “morally satisfying.” Thus, we focused on the interviewees’ self-presentation, particularly on how they presented themselves as being moral (or, in their own words, “professional” or “committed”); from this, we learned about their commitment regarding the issue of economic abuse.

**THE REPLICATING ACTS OF WELFARE ORGANIZATIONS IN THE ENCOUNTER WITH SURVIVORS OF ECONOMIC ABUSE**

Following the lead of Toubiana and Zietsma (2017), we extracted the institutional logics characterizing each of the welfare organizations we examined. Based on their method, we examined the “activation” of the institutional logic in light of four aspects that corresponded to the material we gathered, out of the seven they examined. These were the sources of authority, occupational identity, sources of legitimacy, and the normative base. Table 1 presents these four aspects as distinguishing between the institutional logics that emerged as indicative of “identity or commitment” (ibid., 928). In our case, commitment to the welfare organizations’ institutional logic also represents commitment to the occupational guidelines, as opposed to commitment to survivors of economic abuse and their right to protection and a rehabilitation process that is suited to their needs.

[Place Table 1 Here]

**The National Insurance Institute: A Bureaucratic Institutional Logic**

The NII is not directly legally responsible for preventing violence against women, and therefore it is possible that its clerks are unfamiliar with the term “economic abuse.” Indeed, when these clerks were asked about economic abuse, a sharp transition was noted, from answers such as “I have no idea what you’re talking about” to clear-cut responses when asked about domestic violence. This transition sheds light on the administrative source of authority: executing the policy based on the category stipulated by the law. Without applying the category of “domestic violence,” these employees are unable to act in favor of the women and the category can be applied only with the approval of a social worker.

One phone call is enough for me, without issuing a report or anything like that. She generally confirms that she’s been in a violent marriage. She tells me she thinks she’s still being threatened, that’s part of the reason she’s not claiming alimony, she thinks she’s afraid of him, and that’s, for example, something I wasn’t aware of, of course. (A. D., rehabilitation social worker)

The use of the term “violent” indicates that the social worker has identified the violence. Once the category has been applied, she explains the possible solutions she is now able to offer. From the perspective of clerks at the NII, the category of “domestic violence” as defined under the law is the single criterion for their commitment. The solution of separating accounts emerged as central regarding economic abuse. The bureaucratic institutional logic does not contradict the commitment to the woman seeking help, however it does make it necessary to disconnect the woman’s specific situation from the accepted organizational practice. One example is the lack of thought given to the possibility that going to the bank will not be meaningful if funds are transferred to a separate account to which the woman has no access. The institutional logic assumes that a separate account is always accessible. Essentially, the source of authority is the administrative execution of the welfare policy and focuses on what the organization can offer the women seeking help.

That’s what I just said, that he doesn’t want to. He limits her shopping. He takes the entire stipend. True, it’s not a very big one, but it still helps them get by. When she can’t even get one shekel, I can say to her, “No problem, if he doesn’t give you money, we can split things up.” I can invite him, say to him “From now on, starting next month, this is how it’s going to be: her part goes to her, your part goes to you.” That’s actually the solution. (H. R., social worker, income support department manager)

Based on an assumption that the economic abuse survivor has a separate and active account that has not been seized, which doesn’t really reflect her reality, a routine procedure emerged repeatedly in all the interviews: the separation of bank accounts is presented as a solution based on the bureaucratic institutional logic. This is done despite the fact that the information contained in the phrase “he limits her shopping” implies the possibility of forceful control and therefore supports the possibility that even if the woman’s part of the stipend does go into her own bank account, these funds will be appropriated in other ways. In the context of such a restriction, it is difficult to imagine the partner allowing the woman to manage her own account. Thus, the institutional logic limits the employee to examining the woman’s relationship with the NII but not with her family members, and therefore does not allow for information regarding economic abuse to be presented.

The second solution that emerged as expressing commitment to the organization as shaped by bureaucratic institutional logic can also only be provided if the economic abuse survivor is recognized as a “domestic violence” survivor. This solution refers to guaranteeing or supplementing the woman’s income to establish her status as a recipient of welfare support, which grants her additional discounts, such as on rent, electricity bills, municipal property taxes, and medication through HMOs. Bureaucratic institutional logic requires its employees to determine eligibility based on responsible use of the organization’s resources. This responsibility leads to a suspicious attitude toward the women seeking help, as expressed in the following excerpt from a claims clerk’s interview, which implies that she must first consider information regarding economic abuse to be false and as intended to misrepresent the couple as living separate lives:

I can tell you that I come across many divorced couples that end up living together. They’re divorced but in the end they’re a couple. Death-related benefits for example, when one of the partners dies and then suddenly it turns out that they were a couple all along, because they want to receive the survivor’s stipend. The couple gets divorced and then one of them dies, and then usually, let’s say the woman comes and asks for a widow’s stipend and we say to her, “You were divorced.” And she says, “No, we were living together.” And that can happen a lot. That actually happens. (A. T., claims clerk and receptionist)

This quote corresponds to the commitment to determine eligibility, which is central to the organization’s procedures, and which at times leads to labeling those seeking welfare support as people who are asking for something they do not deserve – an approach which generates an attitude of suspicion. The bureaucratic logic is replicated in how the employee exercises discretion and instructs the employee to prevent the possibility of a woman receiving support she is not entitled to receive by law; this thereby prevents others from receiving the support they indeed require. The interviewee’s statement describes her acts as reflecting a commitment to preserving the NII’s reputation for strictly adhering to procedures as its source of legitimacy, and the employee validates it by adhering to the organizational guidelines, which do not include intervening in the couple’s relationship. On the other hand, from the employee’s perspective, ensuring eligibility, which has recently been phrased as the commitment to exhausting rights (Yasour Borochovitch, Benjamin & Renan Barzilay 2021) based on the normative base of that same logic and its broader significance, involves a higher level of commitment and intense and difficult work:

The price is the workload. Listen, when you collapse with your tongue hanging out because of the workload and you want to help everyone and help and help, and you come home exhausted, it’s hard. Because the work is hard. It’s one of the difficult departments at the NII… For example, in a recent case where the woman had many assets, her claim was denied. I denied it and closed the claim, because if you have a lot, you don’t really need help. The total stipend is 3,000 NIS. And then on Sunday the social worker called me and told me that he pulled some maneuver and took over her bank account and now she has nothing. Write, we’ll contact the head office, let’s see what we can do. It’s not something I can decide to do on my own. (Y. K., income support department manager)

While the employee describes the pressure of her work life using the moral code of being a worthy employee who wants to help everyone, guided by the logic of their exercising their rights, she nevertheless closed a typical case of economic abuse. She describes her dependence on the social worker who has the information regarding economic abuse and who is organizationally authorized to address the context of the relationship and therefore is authorized to demand that the speaker reopen the claim. The possibility of addressing economic abuse depends on cooperation with the social worker; however the path to ensuring assistance is blocked. The commitment to helping them exercise rights (“let’s see what we can do”) allows the speaker to contact the head office; however the organizational procedures do not grant her the authority to allocate the stipend (“it’s not something I can decide to do on my own”). Here we have an occupational identity that is morally committed to providing help and challenges the routine organizational activity. The significance of the information pertaining to violence and abuse is expanded, and, consequently, so is the employee’s treatment of the case, from being the administrative source of authority to focusing on pooling resources; placing a call to a shelter when necessary and talking to the social worker to gain a better understanding of cases that require special treatment. However, by doing so, she is in fact exceeding her authority in a way that requires her to make an immense effort, challenging the response that embodies bureaucratic logic, which demands that employees focus solely on the relationship between those seeking support and the NII and on providing concrete solutions. This is illustrated by how debts incurred by abusive partners in the women’s name are addressed:

Q: And do you have any solutions for debts?

A: Not too many, only for national insurance income support cases, then the debt goes down with the minimum deduction. (H. R., social worker, income support department manager)

The debts suffered by economic abuse survivors are not included in the institutional logic emerging from the practice of deducting a minimum, which refers to deducting debts to the NII from the income it provides. The practice is limited to cases where, according to its calculations, a woman receiving income support has received more than she is entitled to receive. Other debts are not part of the dialogue between the employee and the woman seeking support, even if they might be significant, for example, if the woman cannot access her bank account because it has been seized by writ of execution. This logic once again limits the clerks’ ability to focus on the couple relationship as the relevant context. They must focus on the relationship the woman has with the NII while disconnecting her from the relationships in her environment. The employees justify limiting the focus to the woman’s relationship with the NII by invoking the value of respecting the women’s privacy:

You hear things here and there, not much, but you hear about it [stories of economic abuse]. There was one woman who told me. She came to ask for income support and I told her to fill in the forms and so on, and then she said that she used to work for a short time because she had to, financially, but then she stopped because she couldn’t take his behavior, and I felt very uncomfortable when she opened up about the situation with me. The truth is I said to her, “You don’t have to tell me anything, you don’t need to share any of this with me.” It’s also not something that affected anything. I mean, I was very uncomfortable that she shared that with me.

Q: And did you have tools you could give her, aside from income support?

A: I said to her, again, maybe the welfare department can help, I don’t have any other tools… I’ll tell you what. On one hand, I think it’s great, because that way you can help them. On the other hand, it’s National Insurance and it’s a bit problematic because our reputation is already not that great, we’re notorious for digging into people’s lives and asking questions and investigating. If we add more questions like these, I don’t know how much they’ll be perceived as coming from a place of wanting to help. That’s what I mean. Again, we don’t really deal with the relationship between the couple, it’s not really our job. I agree that it’s good to know for the purpose of providing assistance, but I don’t know to what extent it will be perceived as positive, that’s what I mean. (A. T., claims clerk and receptionist)

The bureaucratic institutional logic on which the employee’s response is based is directed at two aspects: on the one hand, shielding herself from the discomfort of learning private information, which the organizational procedures define as irrelevant and which, from her perspective, cannot influence her action (“It’s also not something that affected anything”). On the other hand, preserving the NII’s good name and refraining from reinforcing its notoriety for “for digging into people’s lives and asking questions and investigating” are important to her. In fact, addressing information regarding economic abuse is experienced as being “not really our job,” that is, beyond the boundaries of the organizational guidelines. In this context, it is possible to understand the lack of interest taken in the woman’s state of emergency. Essentially, the organization’s established definition of normative action does not obligate the clerk to take an interest in the woman seeking support, to make calls on her behalf, or to connect her to formal or informal sources of social support. Clerks and managers who take it upon themselves to provide such a service do so as a challenging act that transcends the boundaries of the organizational guidelines. Therefore, the institutional logic that emerges is comprised of (1) the source of authority, which is the commitment to a concrete bureaucratic procedure anchored in the confirmation obtained from a social worker validating that the woman is a survivor of abuse; (2) the clerks’ occupational identity, which allows them to use information to preserve organizational routines, making challenging acts relatively rare; (3) the source of legitimacy, or adherence to the organization’s guidelines; and, finally, (4) the normative base of defining bureaucratic eligibility and exhausting rights. Such institutional logic allows employees to respond to economic abuse survivors by helping them fit into the organization’s existing definitions, particularly that of “domestic violence.” As long as a case has not been classified under this category, for example, if there is no validating document from a social worker, the significance of information regarding economic abuse is diminished in a way that prevents national insurance clerks from making appropriate solutions accessible to women in need of support.

**The Welfare Services Division and Violence Prevention Centers: A Therapeutic Institutional Logic**

In the social services division and domestic violence prevention centers, the predominant discourse is therapeutic and focuses on discussing the problem. Even when social workers are aware that they alone hold the authority to recognize a woman’s status as being relevant in the context of the Domestic Violence Prevention Act, at times they refrain from recognizing it as such:

Even if we do issue some kind of approval, let’s say, for example, that she’s asked for assistance with rent because she’s a battered woman, because of our experience we’re careful with the terminology we use. We always say, “the woman says,” “the woman would attest,” and we never treat it as objective reality. That’s the idea, that we’re a treatment-focused place. In providing treatment we’re not supposed to get to the truth, we’re supposed to be with the patient in their experience, which is also subjective. That’s our job, that’s why we’re not part of the courts vis-à-vis the police and we’re also unrelated to any legal proceedings or criminal proceedings. We’re a place that offers treatment. We can only help her get stronger, get out of the cycle of violence, accompany her afterwards… but no… approvals. And I truly believe that’s the way it should be. (B. A., center director and treating social worker)

The employee’s words emphatically express the therapeutic approach, which focuses primarily on the woman and her ability to extricate herself from the emotional place she is in. According to the speaker, information regarding violence is subjective. While social workers help by writing letters to secure rent assistance, they do not stand beside the women; they make sure to avoid validating their reports of abuse, justifying this by “not taking sides.” Similar to the NII, in the social services, the replication of the institutional logic is made possible by being loyal to the value of caution: ensuring that the encounter with the woman seeking help is therapeutic rather than legal. The employees replicate the therapeutic focus by refusing to arrive at any definite conclusions about the woman’s “objective situation.”

Thus, the prevailing organizational practice encourages employees to hold a professional identity as social workers committed to the therapeutic process, drawing on the normative base of empowering the women seeking support and strengthening their assertiveness. Social workers emphasized their ability as family social workers to get to know the families’ needs and refer them to appropriate projects in the community, including women’s empowerment groups, employment groups, and possibilities of pursuing education, despite the routine that limits the possibility of making material resources accessible:

My job here is to empower her, so she starts to understand that this is abuse. It’s not that I’m trying to convince her that there’s abuse, but if she describes things – and here we’re also talking about the psychosocial explanations… “it sounds to me like,” she’s living her life and she knows if she’s in an abusive situation or not. I say to her, “It sounds like there’s economic control going on, this could be a case of economic abuse, if he controls all the resources and you’re going around with no money and all that, then maybe, what would happen if you kept some of the money with you?” I suggest solutions, it’s a process. I’ve been accompanying her for a few months now, she’s still in it… the solution I can offer her – first recognize that there’s abuse or that she’s under some kind of control, and then see if she wants to set herself free. (D. B., family social worker)

The social worker explains that the woman she is treating has “been here for a few months now,” i.e. suffering from economic abuse, and has not been offered any solution that addresses it. The long period of time is attributed to the woman’s inability to take action based on acknowledgment of the economic abuse or identifying her desire to break free from it. The social worker’s source of authority as a professional is her responsibility for mediating the welfare policy to the woman seeking support. Alongside treatment and awareness, solutions are also offered that are customarily made accessible to recipients of welfare support in cases of financial distress. The replication of organizational practices takes place alongside acts that challenge them. Challenging acts take the form of connecting the women to civil society organizations that act in concrete ways in the face of economic abuse and the unique needs it creates by providing legal and financial counselling:

When the woman leaves, it’s easier, she has her own bank account. In the bank pilot, if the income level and the credit limit are low – they can increase the credit limit. If she has a loan, they can lower the interest rate. Mortgages can even be frozen for a certain period, until she gets back on her feet. There are all kinds of steps that can be taken.

Q: Is this personalized treatment provided by the bank?

A: Personalized, tailored to the needs of the specific woman. It’s not something that’s generally applied – you can do a certain thing for one woman and not for the other. The bank in the branch itself, appoints contact people and we transfer the cases to them. (K. G., center director and treating social worker)

Alongside loyalty to preserving the therapeutic institutional logic, these words also express a commitment towards survivors of economic abuse. Social workers ascribe extra-organizational meaning to the source of authority rooted in mediating the welfare policy and create a sequence between the therapeutic focus and providing relevant aid, such as legal counselling or help with dealing with the bank. The sources of legitimacy are anchored in the professional knowledge, skills, and experience and, therefore, it is appropriate to look for extra-organizational sources of rehabilitative assistance. Loyalty to the organizational practices validates professionalism, while the recognition that survivors of economic abuse require more than the therapeutic process establishes the commitment to provide additional solutions. While “therapy” is the dominant organizational practice, whether economic abuse survivors are referred to “legal counselling” or to “assistance from the bank” depends on the social worker’s commitment, even if the social worker has no control over them. The heavy workload at the citizen counselling service for example, means that many survivors remain with no solutions. Similarly, the treatment of seized bank accounts or debts is extra-organizational.

The normative base for the social worker’s act emerges as a combination of providing reflection and therapy and connecting survivors to third- and business-sector initiatives. It is important to note that these initiatives are not universal and the solutions they offer are not accessible to all the social services divisions, not even to all the violence prevention centers. For example, a lawyer working on behalf of a nonprofit organization was available at a certain center until the cooperation with the nonprofit ended, with no replacement. Thus, locating relevant initiatives becomes a challenging act.

Consequently, the institutional logic guiding social workers’ actions, which allows them to experience themselves as committed to the criteria of professionalism and attentiveness, or to use institutional logic terminology, as “moral” and “rational,” is making treatment and counselling accessible, empowering women, and raising awareness. Connecting women to resources relevant to their situation as survivors of intimate partner abuse in general and economic abuse in particular, is a challenging act that requires additional effort on their part. With regard to protecting survivors from further abuse, the therapeutic logic creates a hierarchal relationship between the social worker who “knows” and the economic abuse survivor who “does not know” and at times even shifts the responsibility for coping with economic abuse to the survivor:

In fact, there’s a woman and there’s economic abuse there. She transfers all the money to her husband, she goes around with practically no money, sometimes not even for the bus, these kinds of situations. It’s undefined… but she still doesn’t quite see it that way. It’s all mixed up with the bankruptcy that’s going on there. She gives him all the money even though they filed for bankruptcy and they pay for everything in cash. Economic abuse is very subtle, but it exists… (M. B., family social worker)

Skills, knowledge, and experience emerge as the basis for legitimizing the response to the survivor, with professionalism referring to convincing the survivor that they are in an abusive relationship, which could include various types of abuse. The solution presented in the excerpt above essentially involves explaining and developing awareness; however no action is presented regarding the specific case beyond the social worker’s role of equipping the survivor with a perspective the latter does not always share. In the social services, a “good” social worker is required to use the knowledge hierarchy in a way that does not necessarily extricate the survivor from her abusive situation. The form of response that replicates the therapeutic institutional logic regarding protecting survivors creates situations in which no action is taken, and this is explained by a lack of resources:

Q: What do you do in situations where there’s a type of tension around money with one of the women you treat who turns to you for help?

A: The financial aid we give is a joke. We’re allowed to give [for] clothing, that’s about 300 NIS a year. It depends, if you have many kids, you get 600 NIS. Amazing. If you buy a cupboard, [you need to] bring in three quotes, based on your income – we’ll see if we can help you. If there’s an after-school activity for your child, show us a quote. Some things we help with indirectly, clothing is something more direct. You asked me how we help when there’s economic abuse?

Q: Is there anything you do?

A: The only thing we used to offer was [referral to] the Pa’amonim nonprofit organization. I don’t really know if that has anything to do with economic abuse. They came to give a lecture here once, I connected them to two families. It was more about how to manage finances properly, I didn’t associate it with economic abuse. (M. D., violence referent social worker)

The social worker presents her commitment to providing financial assistance as rendered ridiculous in light of the small sums she can approve and no financial aid being given to the survivor, ultimately dependent on civil society organizations such as Pa’amonim. Essentially, the possibility of providing practical help is transferred to other, nonpublic institutions. The employees are shackled under the institutional logic shaping the way their role is defined, the training they undergo, and the lack of solutions they can offer. The dominance of the therapeutic institutional logic is replicated, with challenging acts taking the form of connecting survivors to solutions offered by other organizations. These challenging acts are not sufficiently distanced from the institutional logic and are performed in its shadow, without undermining the loyalty to replicate it.

The institutional logic that emerges is comprised of: (1) a source of authority based on mediating the welfare policy as well as a commitment to providing long-term treatment; (2) an occupational identity from which the commitment to provide a therapeutic solution stems; (3) a source of legitimacy for the social workers’ action, which stems from the professional knowledge, skills, and experience they bring to their encounters with women seeking help; and (4) a normative base, which focuses on empowering and accompanying the women seeking help. In light of these four aspects of the institutional logic, the possible response involves providing a therapeutic solution and a small amount of material help while maintaining a commitment to caution, based on the therapeutic perspective that recognizes that stories of economic abuse are subjective. Given that the commitment to caution stems from the perception that the appropriate response should be therapeutic rather than legal, the significance of information regarding economic abuse is diminished in a way that highlights the lack of understanding regarding the woman’s state of emergency. This causes the provision of long-term treatment to remain a dominant commitment that can only be challenged in extra-organizational ways.

**The Assistance Units: A Mediating Institutional Logic**

The assistance units’ mediating institutional logic emerges from their source of authority, which is based in the mediation mechanisms they offer the partners. The occupational identity of assistance unit employees comprises social workers and a few lawyers who use mediation terminology and adopt a “neutral” approach as an effective means of dealing with disputes between parties in divorce proceedings. Part of the mediation mechanism, according to these employees, emerges as being anchored in this “neutral” approach, and they explain that this is in order for both partners to experience the process as balanced and in order for them to be interested in cooperating with the staff. This is illustrated in the words of a social worker in an assistance unit:

We fill out this form, we get the injured party to sign it, the party who’s suffered the abuse, and of course we also have relevant information regarding the violence prevention centers in each city, we have telephone numbers, we give her this number. We provide the information, to both the offending party and the injured party, we refer both the offending party and the injured party to the violence prevention centers in each city… If we think there’s a problem, that the person is at some kind of risk, that they’re experiencing abuse and aren’t fully acknowledging it, we make them aware of how we see things. The longer a divorce proceeding goes on, as it progresses, you can expect things to escalate and become more extreme. (G. Z., social worker)

The speaker explains that the assistance units respond by using a form to refer the woman to a violence prevention center. This expresses the mediating institutional logic aiming to preserve the “symmetric” situation between the partners without expanding upon the significance of information regarding economic abuse during the sessions. Apparently, the signature validates that the information has been relayed. With it, the referral, along with the responsibility for dealing with the abuse is transferred to the violence prevention centers. The social worker makes sure to maintain neutrality as she speaks, implying that the man may be the victim suffering the abuse. Interestingly, the employee is aware that the abuse will inevitably escalate during the divorce proceedings; however the employee’s actions remain unaffected by this under the mediating institutional logic, which does not allow her to expand upon the significance of information regarding economic abuse nor the significance of the measures that can be taken in light of it. Thus, this institutional logic’s source of legitimacy is the responsibility of conducting the mediation process; therefore referral is necessary and perpetuates the organizational practice of informing and raising awareness. The social worker obtains the signatures and highlights the risk. As the normative base in the assistance units is being responsible, the social worker uses referrals as the appropriate response when information about economic abuse arises during sessions. In fact, in responding by informing and raising awareness, the social worker is being responsible and following the organization’s guidelines. All the interviews we conducted in the assistance units indicate that when social workers address risk, they focus on physical abuse, while victims of economic abuse are not perceived as being at risk. The mediating institutional logic directs employees to use referrals as an expression of their commitment to inform and raise awareness and to recommend seeking legal counselling, as the following quote demonstrates:

You come across it and you hear about it also unrelated to divorce proceedings. A history going back years of not being allowed to use credit cards or being limited in terms of going out to work or needing to report every expense, or being given an amount of money that’s supposed to be enough. I mean, that too, that’s a type of control.

Q: What do you do when you come across these kinds of stories?

A: It’s the same treatment, more or less. We recommend legal representation, consulting someone about their rights. Because it’s a pattern of abuse, we always recommend contacting the violence prevention centers. It’s not right to go through a divorce without having any therapeutic support in the background. Some steps can put them at risk. It’s a combination of receiving accurate and relevant legal counselling regarding the status, the necessary legal proceeding, and being professionally accompanied by a violence prevention social worker. That’s an integral part of the process. If she’s not being treated, we’ll see to it that that connection is made, whether it’s economic abuse or any other type of abuse. To me it makes no difference. (G. Z., social worker)

The mediating institutional logic allows the speaker to experience her conduct as moral when she becomes aware of the existence of abuse and realizes that she must turn to another institution for help, that is, transfer the matter to the violence prevention centers that offer a therapeutic solution. The same approach that makes no distinction between various types of abuse is echoed in the quote below. However, deviation from the mediating institutional logic seems possible in certain situations; challenging acts emerge in the form of directing the economically abusive partner to change his ways. The employee’s challenging act expresses a higher level of commitment to the survivor, yet it is still limited by the organizational framework and the institutional logic that is based on transferring information, taking responsibility, informing, and raising awareness.

Again, in the same way, it’s not how human beings behave to one another. The minute you have one party who’s controlling the other party’s funds and preventing them from going about their business freely with the money that legally belongs to them, that’s control. That’s control, that’s intimidation, that’s threatening, that’s definitely abuse. I don’t need the law to define it as a criminal offense – from my perspective as a professional, that’s abuse for all intents and purposes. I act the same way I would in any case of abuse, I inform… This could involve sitting in front of people [and saying to them], “This can’t be. Right now, tell her what the bank account number is. Go on, say it.” There were situations where people acted all innocent and said, so I said, “Why don’t you say what the bank account number is, what’s the code, let her know, teach her how to get into it and see it.” That’s a tiny little thing, it doesn’t really change the pattern, but when the woman is legitimized because someone has said these things out loud and legitimized her feelings and gives it a name, it puts her in a little bit of a different place. (G. V., Assistance Unit Director)

The commitment to challenging the dominant organizational practice, that is, acting against the economically abusive partner, takes the form of condemnation: “people act all innocent.” The speaker considers economic abuse to be a form of abuse and stands beside the woman, asking the partner to transfer the information granting access to the bank account. Alongside the institutional logic that is committed to neutrality emerges the commitment to the moral code of taking responsibility, which allows this act to take on the meaning of standing beside the survivor to some extent, by referring her to legal counselling and informing her about the legal proceedings.

The mediating institutional logic draws its authority from the field of mediation/agreements, which emphasizes the importance of obtaining the couples’ signatures on the document stating that they understand that the abuse will be treated elsewhere. The assistance unit social workers and lawyers’ occupational identity is organized around their neutral stance towards the relationship between the partners. The occupational identity is particularly salient in the gender-neutral language they use when talking about the person inflicting the abuse and the person suffering it. This reflects their professional approach, according to which neither side is generally disadvantaged and which allows them to stand behind a sweeping commitment to the process of inquiry and mediation. The source of legitimacy for the acts the social workers describe is their commitment to relaying information regarding the formal possibility of treating abuse, if abuse is in fact present in the relationship. Informing and raising awareness also relate to the normative basis of compartmentalization, referral, and transferring the responsibility for treating economic abuse to the violence prevention centers. These four aspects of the mediating institutional logic allow employees to respond to economic abuse survivors by diminishing the significance of information regarding economic abuse by stating that it is not possible to address the abuse, while transferring the treatment to the violence prevention centers.

**THREE PATHS TO RESPONDING TO SURVIVORS OF ECONOMIC ABUSE**

The women’s movement in Israel and around the world has been working to promote the state’s commitment to protecting survivors of economic abuse. This has found expression in legislative changes that have already been made in various countries, including the United States, Canada, England, New Zealand, and India. In Israel, academic discourse, civil society organizations, particularly Ruach Nashit, and all the women who were involved in promoting the bill addressing the issue, have raised public awareness and understanding of economic abuse. This public discourse has given rise to the possibility that welfare organization employees might be able to distance themselves from the patriarchal institutional logic that silences the phenomenon of economic abuse and the ease with which hegemonic masculinity allows monetary control to be converted into economic abuse (Renan Barzilay & Youseri 2016). Thus, a unique opportunity has been created to investigate the commitment of welfare organization employees to survivors seeking solutions to support their economic rehabilitation. The increased awareness regarding economic abuse has strengthened the possibility of including economic abuse survivors within the category of “domestic violence” survivors by challenging the referral actions of the welfare organizations. At the same time, the possibility of replicating routine acts that do not acknowledge economic abuse survivors as living in a state of emergency and therefore as being entitled to solutions that would enable their economic rehabilitation has continued to gain strength. The institutional logics perspective allows us to deepen our understanding regarding the development of these two options. A primary limitation of the current study is that it did not investigate the employees’ occupational identity as shaping their influence in the organization as actors who can or cannot establish an autonomous space for action that diverges from the organization’s guidelines. Future research could investigate this potential and the implications of the occupational position on the possibility of challenging organizational routines. Here we have employed the institutional logics approach to extract three social processes that can explain the commitment of welfare organization employees to survivors of economic abuse when this takes the form of challenging the institutional logic in each of the welfare organizations, each of which corresponds to the patriarchal institutional logic in its own way.

The Domestic Violence Prevention Act of 1991 instructs the welfare organizations examined in the current study to allocate minimal material resources to mitigating the dependence of economic abuse survivors on their partners. Thus, the patriarchal institutional logic gives rise to a simultaneity: on the one hand, employees are instructed to act in a way that is committed to survivors of intimate partner abuse, while, on the other hand, the state bears no responsibility for making it possible for survivors to live independently from their abusive partners. In the encounter with economic abuse survivors, the preservation of organizational practices guided by the patriarchal logic means this simultaneity is applied to them. Challenging the institutional practices in such an encounter means allocating resources that will allow the economic rehabilitation process to begin in the face of loans, debts, complicated living situations, and an inability to withdraw funds. The three social processes we have extracted by analyzing the four aspects of institutional logic in each of the welfare organizations – sources of authority, occupational identity, sources of legitimacy, and the normative base – indicate that the institutional logics operating in all three organizations act to replicate a patriarchal institutional logic. Consequently, their employees’ commitment to preserving organizational routines has emerged as dominant. Each of the institutional logics that have emerged, the bureaucratic, therapeutic, and mediating, perpetuates the process that allows employees to experience themselves as doing the right thing and being committed to economic abuse survivors, even when their actions effectively deny the survivors recognition as requiring a unique type of rehabilitation. When they are recognized as survivors of domestic abuse, the customary minimal therapeutic resources are made accessible to them. Regarding understanding this practice of denial, which sometimes means it takes longer for a case of economic abuse to be defined “domestic violence,” institutional logic and the understanding of embedded agency as proposed by Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury (2012) are critical to distinguishing between the specific actions that are possible in each of the welfare organizations we examined. We observed that in the encounter between economic abuse survivors and welfare services employees, the latter exercise discretion based on loyalty to the welfare organizations’ ethos of support, as expressed in their acceptance of the legitimacy of forms of support that do not address the state of emergency inherent in economic abuse. This replication of institutional logics emerged as being based on three pathways to denying the commitment to protecting survivors of economic abuse, which were found to exist alongside the employees’ commitment to the women, as well as actions that challenged the institutional logic.

In the NII, we found that in the context of the bureaucratic institutional logic, the significance of information regarding economic violence is reduced to a dichotomous approach that focuses on two documents: confirmation of the existence of a separate bank account and confirmation from a social worker that the woman is a victim of domestic violence. Without these documents, the employees are not able to take action. We found that alongside the replicating act of relying solely on these documents for determining eligibility, the employees’ commitment to providing support, in certain cases, created the ability to challenge the organizational routine by acting to have these documents issued more quickly.

In the social services division and domestic violence prevention centers, we encountered organizational complexity, and the therapeutic institutional logic was found to reduce the significance of economic abuse. We found that although social workers have the critical authority to issue a document that validates the economic abuse survivor’s status as relevant under the Domestic Violence Prevention Act, their commitment to the therapeutic institutional logic makes them cautious and they refrain from the critical challenging act of issuing the document to support the survivor. Their commitment to preservation allows them to offer long-term treatment alongside a security net of sorts in the basket of resources provided to women in poverty. Challenging, in the form of relying on extra-organizational resources, emerged along with the commitment to protecting the women: employees searched for extra-organizational solutions specific to economic abuse, such as the bank pilot.

In the assistance units near the family courts, the status of information regarding economic abuse was found to have the lowest value. This type of information coming from the women, while being relevant to conducting the mediation processes between the partners, serves only for the purpose of informing the couple of the address of the violence prevention center in the relevant area and making the referral. The replication of patriarchal logic is expressed in the routine of providing gender-neutral treatment, as well as by disconnecting the information about economic abuse from the mediation process for which the assistance units are responsible, in a way that makes no support available to the economic abuse survivor during the rehabilitation process. At the same time, challenging acts emerged when assistance unit employees brought the partner into the conversation by using intimidating instructions that emphasized the women’s rights.

While the field of institutional logics tends to discuss challenging processes in the context of an emerging oppositional institutional logic, our analysis presents a typology of challenging processes that echo the change in public discourse, without reference to the emergence of such an institutional logic. These include challenging processes as a commitment to the exercise of rights and making an effort to create the conditions for eligibility; challenging processes as a commitment to making informal support available through extra-organizational projects; challenging processes as a commitment to verbally emphasizing rights; and finally, critical challenging processes that deny the institutional logic and express commitment in ways that make coping resources available, such as issuing a validating document. This typology is important as it highlights the need to conceptualize the conditions that enable challenging processes within organizations, and this includes assessing the extent to which the employees’ agency is embedded within the dominant institutional logic. The typology that emerged indicates for example, that critical challenging processes that are greatly distanced from the local institutional logic are made possible only when a rare commitment emerges among those whose social identity is particularly attuned to extra-organizational activism.

The institutional logics perspective through which we extracted the three pathways of denial has enabled us to understand the content of preserving and challenging acts performed by the employees in the three welfare organizations we examined. Hence, the contribution of the current study is dual. First, it contributes to the institutional logics perspective itself by illuminating the typology of challenging processes. Second, it contributes to the research dealing with welfare organizations’ response to economic abuse. The contribution of the institutional logics perspective is related to the importance and force of influence of feminist activism, which has been raising awareness regarding the implications of economic abuse on the lives of women for years. Regarding the feasibility of survivors of economic abuse receiving support, we found that while the awareness promoted by this activism has had some influence on the welfare organizations and the employees whose social identity exposes them to its content, it has not been able to undermine the status of the patriarchal institutional logic. The patriarchy’s influence is still stronger than feminist awareness in the context of the institutional logics that characterize the welfare organizations, which are the bureaucratic, the therapeutic, and the mediating institutional logics.

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