Compassionate organizing: Employees' satisfaction with corporate philanthropic disaster response and their psychological and physiological strain after a natural disaster

ABSTRACT

The literature on corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy generally focuses on how employers come to the aid of those outside the organization in different regions that have been affected by disasters. Less is known about how corporate philanthropic disaster response (CPDR) directed toward their own employees relates to important employee outcomes. We draw from the conservation of resources (Hobfoll, 1989) and compassionate organizing (Dutton, Worline, Frost, & Lilius, 2006) literatures to argue that employers who respond compassionately by aiding their employees to cope with a natural disaster are more likely to be perceived by their employees through a positive lens as providing proper support and helping to restore resource loss (Hobfoll, 1989). Accordingly, we propose a link between employee satisfaction with CPDR and employee strain that is explained by perceived organizational support. Based on a sample of 695 Hurricane Katrina survivors, we find support for our prediction that satisfaction with CPDR reduces employee psychological and physiological strain via its positive effects on perceived organizational support. Theoretical contributions and implications are discussed.

Key words: natural disaster, compassionate organizing, satisfaction with corporate philanthropic disaster response, perceived organizational support, strain, emotional exhaustion, & somatic complaints

PRACTITIONER POINTS

1. Organizations are encouraged to fulfill their social responsibilities. Our research shows
   that organizations should be socially responsible not only to the general public, but also to
   their own employees. Responding compassionately by taking care of an organization's
   own employees is an important element in carrying out their social responsibilities. In the
   aftermath of a severe natural disaster, employees may need to rely on their organizations
   to provide timely assistance. Such assistance could help them mitigate their strain, both
   psychologically and physiologically, aroused from the disaster they experienced.
   Moreover, satisfaction with corporate disaster response has important consequences to
   employees either directly or indirectly affected by the disaster.

2. Organizations' compassionate organizing in the form of philanthropic disaster response to
   their own employees may be beneficial to the organization. First, it shows the
   organization's intention to fulfill their social responsibility and to be a good and ethical
   citizen. Second, by providing assistance to their own employees to deal with the
   challenge of restoring a normal life, organizations can help employees to continue
   working in a productive and effective way.

Compassionate organizing: Employee satisfaction with corporate philanthropic disaster response and their psychological and physiological strain after a natural disaster

"Life as we knew it is gone"- Katrina victim (Personal Communication, 2006)

INTRODUCTION

Natural disasters, such as the Tsunami in Japan or Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy in the United States, affect a substantial number of people each year worldwide. During the last 30 years, approximately 108 natural disasters including floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, and tornados have hit the United States. Damages caused by these disasters can be difficult to overcome because "just one disaster can wipe off the economy of a whole region or country and put hundreds of thousands of people at risk of economic and social marginalization" (United Nations, International Strategy for Disaster Reduction [UN/ISDR], 2006, p. 2).

Disaster relief efforts from government agencies (e.g., Federal Emergency Management Agency) are expected by victims (e.g., Waldman, Carmeli, & Halevi, 2011) but may not always be reliable, available, or expedient (Kapucu & Van Wart, 2008; Reid, 2013). Particularly in the case of Hurricane Katrina, many local and government agencies were ill-equipped in their preparation and management of an unprecedented disaster (Cherry & Allred, 2012). Thus, in times of need employees might need to rely on aid from their own employers. By responding to a disaster, the organization conducts what is termed compassionate organizing, or the process by which "individuals in organizations notice, feel, and respond to human pain in a coordinated way" (Dutton, Worline, Frost, & Lilius, 2006, p.59). The extreme physical and emotional devastation caused by disasters may urge employers to engage in compassionate organization because of "…an empathic desire to enhance the well-being of others" (Muller, Pfarrer, & Little, 2014, p. 5). This type of

corporate philanthropic disaster response (CPDR; Fernando, 2007) could also be classified as corporate social responsibility (Carroll, 1979; Jamali, 2008). Scholars have noted that employers have been increasingly involved in disaster relief (e.g., Muller & Whiteman, 2009), such as providing help after earthquakes (e.g., Zhang, Rezaee, &Zhu, 2010), tsunamis (e.g., Patten, 2008), and hurricanes (e.g., Sanchez, Korbin, & Viscarra, 1995).

According to the stakeholder perspective, employers have the responsibility to acknowledge a duty of care toward their own employees as well as other stakeholders (Jamali, 2008; Simmons, 2004). Yet much of the CPDR research has an external focus and examines employers' social initiatives directed towards the general public who are victims of natural disasters (e.g., Muller & Whiteman, 2009), and relatively little attention has been paid to efforts that are internally targeted toward an employer's own employees in disaster situations. Yet, philanthropic disaster response to an employer's own employees is critical for two reasons. First, from a societal perspective, such assistance may fulfill the employer's responsibility of being a good and ethical citizen by responding compassionately to those affected by a natural disaster. Second, from a utilitarian perspective, disaster assistance could help employees rebuild their home and lives, which then indirectly helps employees continue to contribute to their employers.

Our goal, therefore, is to understand the positive effects of employers' compassionate disaster relief acts at work. Specifically, we examine if and why employee satisfaction with CPDR (defined as the perception that the organization has acted appropriately and effectively in assisting employees after the disaster) relates to their strain in the aftermath of a natural disaster, both psychologically and physiologically. We propose that when satisfied with

CPDR, employees should have a positive evaluation of their situation, and perceive greater support from their organization. Moreover, based on the conservation of resources theory (COR; Hobfoll, 1989), we posit that employee perceived organizational support can decrease their psychological and physiological strain following a depletion of resources induced by a natural disaster. We further propose a mediation model such that satisfaction with CPDR can ease the strain resulting from the disaster, through the mediating role of employees' perceived organizational support.

Our research has the potential to make several important contributions to the literatures. First, we integrate two highly similar literatures that are often examined independently by considering corporate disaster response to be an aspect of compassionate organizing. By doing so, we also extend the literature on corporate social responsibility in general and CPDR in particular, and demonstrate the important role of CPDR as a reflection of compassionate organizing in the process of aiding an employer's own employees.

In addition, we acknowledge the serious impact of natural disasters on organizational life and highlight the interplay among employees, their employer, and the external environment. Our research underscores the notion that employees are important stakeholders to employers, who are also the target of corporate social responsibility.

Second, past research indicates that organizational support can serve as a buffer against strain arising from stressful events (George, Reed, Ballard, Colin, & Fielding, 1993; Sanchez et al., 1995). We draw from the COR theory to argue that employees who are satisfied with their organization's demonstration of internally focused compassion in the aftermath of a natural disaster may be better equipped with the resources needed to alleviate

psychological and physiological strain. In particular, we emphasize the role of perceived organizational support as a bridge between satisfaction with corporate disaster response and strain. Further, we demonstrate that employers should provide support to employees regarding events outside the workplace as well because such events may have a substantial impact not only on employees' personal lives, but also on their work lives (e.g., Dyrbye, et al., 2006; Hochwarter, et al., 2008).

We test our model on a sample of 695 Hurricane Katrina survivors. As one of the most devastating and costly natural disasters, Hurricane Katrina, coupled with the failure of the levees, devastated the Gulf Coast region and left 80 percent of the city of New Orleans submerged (Pardue, Moe, McInnis, Thibodeaux, Valsaraj, Maciasz, et al., 2005). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, Hurricane Katrina resulted in the loss of over 1,200 lives, $2.9 billion in wages, 95,000 jobs, and the evacuation of over tens of thousands of people (Dolfman, Wasser, & Bergman, 2007). During Hurricane Katrina, many local employers took various philanthropic disaster response actions to help their own employees, including financial, material, and emotional assistance. For example, the Hilton hotel allowed the family members of its employees to stay at the hotel and, following the storm, helped employees find employment at other Hilton hotels (Weber & Palmeri, 2005). PepsiAmericas established an employee relief fund to provide financial resources to the gulf employees and their families who were affected by the hurricane (PepsiAmericas, 2005). Thus, we believe, Hurricane Katrina creates a suitable setting to examine the relationship between employees' satisfaction with CPDR, their perceived organizational support, and their psychological and physiological strain.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Employee Satisfaction with CPDR and Perceived Organizational Support

As previously noted, we define satisfaction with CPDR as the perception that the organization has acted appropriately and effectively in assisting employees after a disaster. As members of the organization, employees have chances to observe their employers' behaviors and responses after a disaster, and accordingly, they could form their own evaluation regarding how well their employers have assisted those suffered. Thus, satisfaction with CPDR is an employee's subjective appraisal of their employer's disaster response. Specifically, employees who are satisfied with CPDR positively evaluate how their employer has assisted others and its own employees after a disaster.

We consider CPDR to be an aspect of compassionate organizing, which is "a collective response to a particular incident of human suffering that entails the coordination of individual compassion in a particular organizational context" (Dutton et al., 2006, p. 61). Compassion involves the awareness of suffering, empathic concern, and behaviors aimed to relieve suffering (Kanov, Maitlis, Worline, Dutton, Frost, & Lilius, 2004). Compassionate organizing is manifested in different forms in organizations and can be enacted by organizations, individuals (Lilius, Kanov, Dutton, Worline, & Maitlis, 2011; Madden, Duchon, Madden, & Plowman, 2012), locals and non-locals (e.g., Shepherd & Williams, 2014). Given the amount of devastation and loss that follows a traumatic event, employees may be fraught with pain and suffering (Kanov, et al., 2004; Waldman, Carmeli, & Halevi, 2011). In such a situation, it is particularly important that employers show compassion by becoming involved in disaster relief. In this regard, CPDR is a compassionate response to

suffering that involves an employer's provision of disaster relief actions to affected victims (Muller & Whiteman, 2009), including their own employees.

Importantly, we focus on employees' satisfaction with their employer's CPDR rather than the employer's actual social initiatives because we want to examine employee attitudes regarding the corporate disaster response rather than what support organizations actually provided. Employers may provide similar types of relief (e.g., food and shelter) but it is how employees interpret and evaluate such actions that likely play a role in the effectiveness of these actions. Indeed, others have argued that research on organizational phenomena should often be based on employee perceptions over objective attributes given that individuals likely "respond on the basis of their perceptions of reality, not necessarily reality per se" (Ferris, Adams, Kolodinsky, Hochwarter, & Ammeter, 2002, p.182). Moreover, because perceptions of events predict subsequent attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen 1975; Hansen, Dunford, Boss, Boss, & Angermeier, 2011), we expect that employee perceptions of the manner in which the organization treats them after a natural disaster helps shape employee attitudes toward the organization.

Therefore, we propose that supportive actions on the part of the employer following a disaster increase employees' perceptions of organizational support or the extent to which the employer values employee contributions and cares about their well-being (Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986). Following a disaster, an organization could indicate a degree of concern by providing valuable assistance to improve (or attempt to improve) the situation for its employees. Such actions could range from flexible work schedules to providing food and shelter for employees and their families. Proactive actions taken by an

employer not only enable employees to come back to work and focus on the employer's

goals, but also assure employees that help is available when needed and they can rely on the

employer during stressful situations (cf. George et al., 1993).

Organizational compassionate acts, such as responding to a disaster, could not only

have an impact on the relationship that people have with their organization, but also on how

employees perceive their organization. Stinglhamber, De Cremer, and Mercken (2006) noted

that "…actions taken or messages sent by the employer or its representatives are interpreted

by the employee as information about organization commitment and caring" (p. 449).

Further, Aguilera, Rupp, Williams, and Ganapathic (2007) argued that an employer's

corporate social responsibility initiatives, shape employees' general attitudes toward their

organization. They suggested that social actions taken by employers provide employees with

information that can be used to judge how they are treated. Supportive of our argument is

research that has indicated that experiencing compassion at work is positively related to

important employee attitudes and feelings, such as affective organizational commitment and

positive emotion (e.g., Lilius, Worline, Maitlis, Kanov, Dutton, & Frost, 2008). Accordingly,

we expect employees who are more satisfied with CPDR to also be more likely to form a

positive evaluation toward their employer and perceive more organizational support. We

therefore advance the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Satisfaction with CPDR is positively related to perceived organizational

support.

Perceived Organizational Support and Employee Strain

A stressor is a condition that may threaten or harm a person, and strain is an individual's psychological, physiological, or behavioral response to a stressor (Jex, Beehr, & Roberts, 1992). According to the socio cognitive model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), the experience of stress depends on how a person cognitively appraises the situation, whether the event is harmful, presents a challenge, or has a positive outcome. A natural disaster such as Hurricane Katrina can be characterized as a severe stressor as it creates "high levels of uncertainty and threaten or are perceived to threaten high priority goals including security of life and property or the general individual or community well-being" (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 1998, p.233). Although a disaster is a short-lived acute event, chronic stressors may emerge during its aftermath and victims may experience stress long after it has passed (e.g., Norris & Uhl, 1993). For example, Hurricane Katrina resulted in job loss, death, temporary and permanent evacuation from the city, separation from family members, destruction of property, and a great deal of uncertainty.

According to the COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001), people aim to control and retain resources which are "…those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual" (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516). Stress can be experienced when people are threatened with resource loss, actually lose resources, or fail to gain additional resources (Hobfoll, 2011). In other words, resources enable individuals to handle stress, enhance their current situation, and prevent future stressful situations (Hobfoll, Johnson, Ennis, & Jackson, 2003). Thus, the more resources that are retained, the less negative outcomes people will experience due to the ability of those resources to enable the person to decrease stress and improve their current and future situations.

Within the context of disasters, victims may experience a loss of a variety of physiological and cognitive/emotional resources that include object resources (i.e., physical possessions such as a car or house), conditions (e.g., marriage or other relationships), personal characteristics (e.g., the way in which a person sees the world), and/or energy resources (e.g., time and money). Such loss of resources was the primary driver of the experience of psychological distress and physiological symptoms (e.g., Freedy, Saladin, Kilpatrick, Resnick, & Saunders, 1994; Freedy, Shaw, Jarrell, & Masters, 1992; Smith & Freedy, 2000). Hochwarter, Laird, and Brouer (2008) found that hurricane survivors with low levels of resources had worse outcomes (e.g., job dissatisfaction, job tension) compared to those with more resources.

The extreme casualties brought on by Hurricane Katrina made salient the vulnerabilities and the limited amount of control individuals had over their lives. As a result, people did not know if or when they were going to rebuild their homes, be reunited with their family members, and get back to "normal." Moreover, survivors of Hurricane Katrina noted in various conversations with the research team during focus groups interviews that they often considered themselves to have two full-time jobs. After spending a full day at work, they would spend another eight or so hours working on rebuilding their homes and repairing their lives. Moreover, in situations where one's colleagues in the workplace were also affected by the disaster, individual employees must deal with a decrease in manpower and a more intensive workload in addition to possible difficulties faced at home. They also experience a decrement in resources because of an unstable community infrastructure.

Given that natural disasters are likely appraised as stressors that induce a considerable amount of strain, we examine both the psychological and the physiological strain caused by disasters. Job burnout is a psychological stress symptom that reflects a negative response to emotional and interpersonal stressors at work (Maslach & Jackson, 1986). It has important consequences for both employers and employees as it is linked to lower levels of job performance, job satisfaction, and commitment, and higher levels of turnover and absenteeism (for a review, see Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). Job burnout consists of three dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced accomplishment (Maslach, 1993). In the current study, we focus on emotional exhaustion, which occurs when there is a depletion of emotional and physiological resources (Maslach, 1993), a situation of specific relevance in the study context. In addition, researchers have argued that emotional exhaustion is the core component of burnout and captures its true meaning (e.g., Cropanzano, Rupp, & Byrne, 2003). Emotional exhaustion is characterized by a lack of energy and a feeling that one's emotional resources are depleted (Cordes & Doughtery, 1993), and has been linked to higher levels of turnover and lower levels of job performance (e.g., Halbesleben & Bowler, 2007; Witt, Andrews, & Carlson, 2004; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998).

We also examine another type of strain, somatic complaints, because research has shown that stressors are detrimental not only to psychological strain, but also to physiological outcomes, such as back pain and headache (e.g., Frese, 1985; Spector & Jex, 1998). More importantly, somatic complaints are quite prevalent and are responsible for a large part of human suffering and healthcare costs, and loss of productivity (e.g., Eriksen & Ihlebaek, 2002). Yet much of the research on stress reactions has focused on psychological outcomes

and less attention has been paid to physiological outcomes such as somatic complaints.

However, emotional exhaustion and somatic strain often occur simultaneously, as found by

Verhoeven and colleagues (Verhoeven, Maes, Kraaij, & Joe, 2003) among secondary school

teachers from different European countries. Other studies also support the concurrence of

emotional exhaustion and somatic strain (e.g., Mikolajczak, Menil, & Luminet, 2007;

Santavirta, Solovieva, & Theorell, 2007). Therefore, it is also important to understand how

we can reduce the negative impact on victims' physiological reactions caused by a stressor.

We draw from the COR theory to explain the buffering effect of perceived organizational

support on strain. In times of stress, perceived organizational support is likely to instill a

belief that the organization will engage in compassionate behaviors that benefit rather than

hurt employees (Stinglhamber et al., 2006). According to Rhodes and Eisenberger (2002, p

698), "POS [i.e., perceived organizational support] is expected to reduce aversive

psychological and psychosomatic reactions (i.e., strains) to stressors by indicating the

availability of material aid and emotional support when needed to face high demands of

work." Employees who perceive that their organization is concerned about their well-being

may reason that their organization will assist them with various resources needed to meet

their job demands and cope with stressful situations (George, Reed, Ballard, Colin, &

Fielding, 1993).Thus, in a disaster context, when employees perceive their employers were

providing support, they would feel that they gain additional resources from their

organizations to restore the loss of objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies,

which in turn alleviate their strain. On the other hand, employees who perceive less support

from their organization may feel that they cannot restore their resource loss and have very

limited resources to cope with stressful demands resulting from the disaster, and are likely to experience strain.

Our arguments are also supported by previous research that has indicated a relationship between perceived organizational support and various indicators of strain, including the experience of burnout and somatic symptoms (e.g., Cropanzano, Howes, Grandey, &Toth, 1997; Jawahar, Stone, & Kisamore, 2007; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Stamper & Johlke, 2003). For example, perceived organizational support relates negatively to general psychological strain, depression, headaches, anger, and burnout (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Richardson, Yang, Vandenberg, DeJoy, &Wilson, 2008). Individuals who perceive support from their employer may believe that in stressful situations, aid is available from the employer when needed (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Thus their ability to successfully and effectively cope with stress increases (George et al., 1993; Kossek, Pichler, Bodner, & Hammer, 2011). Accordingly, we expect that employees who perceive that their employer will provide the resources needed to manage potential job strain will experience lower levels of psychological (i.e., emotional exhaustion) and physiological (i.e., somatic symptoms) strain. Thus, we propose the following:

Hypothesis 2: Perceived organizational support is negatively related to (a) emotional exhaustion and (b) somatic complaints.

The Mediating Role of Perceived Organizational Support

Taking our arguments together, we propose that perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between satisfaction with CPDR and employee psychological and

physiological strain. The strain experienced at work because of a loss of resources may be accounted for by employees' perceptions about whether they will be able to recover from their losses or have any additional losses. As noted, after a disaster, surviving employees usually face increased job demands due to the decreased workforce. They also face increased personal demands on rebuilding their homes and community, which may drain them from effectively functioning on their jobs. In such a stressful situation, employers' assistance could help shape employee perceptions and attitudes toward the organization (Lilly, et al., 2008). When employees experience concern and assistance from their employer following a disaster, it suggests that the employer is interested in and has offered resources to minimize employees' job and/or personal demands, ultimately leading to reduced strain.

In addition, if employees are satisfied with the manner in which their employer treated them and others after a disaster, they are likely to use this information when evaluating the employer's general concern for employees. This is particularly critical following a natural disaster as employees are prone to high levels of stress and often perceive that they are unable to control and predict events in their lives (Leon, Hyre, Ompad, DeSalvo, & Muntner, 2007). In short, we argue that perceived organizational support is the psychological mechanism through which satisfaction with CPDR reduces employee strain (i.e., emotional exhaustion and somatic symptoms). We offer the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Perceived organizational support mediates the relationship between satisfaction with CPDR and (a) emotional exhaustion, and (b) somatic complaints.

METHODS

Data and Sample

The research was part of a larger project examining employee attitudes and withdrawal, resulting from Hurricane Katrina. Employees ($N = 2,870$) from four different firms contracting with a large government agency located in the Southern U.S. were recruited for participation in this project. These employees worked at facilities directly impacted by Hurricane Katrina (Fall 2005). Data were collected from employee respondents one year following Hurricane Katrina (Fall 2006). Typical jobs held by these employees included engineering, administration, production, analysis, and project management. We took measures to mitigate common method bias concerns when we collected the data. Following the recommendations of Podsakoff and Organ (1986), data were collected in two phases with a two-month time lag in between, such that the independent and dependent variables were temporally separated. Further, the participants were assigned random ID numbers to assure complete anonymity to increase the likelihood that they would be open and honest in their responses.

Participants were asked to fill out an online survey or a paper survey. Those employees who did not have easy access to the Internet were given a paper survey and a prepaid envelope in which they could return their responses directly to the researchers. For employees with internet access, a link to the web survey was emailed directly to them. A total of 1,191 employees completed phase 1 (a response rate of 41.5%) and 916 completed phase 2 (a response rate of 31.9%). During phase 1, data on employees' satisfaction with CPDR, perceived organizational support, demographic variables, and control variables were collected. After approximately two months, the phase 2 survey was administered, which included measures of emotional exhaustion, somatic complaints, satisfaction with the local

government, and other variables unrelated to the current study. Based on their random ID

numbers, we received 695 matched surveys from employees who participated in both phase 1

and phase 2 (24.2% of the total study population). Among them, the majority participated in

the online survey (93.7%).[1] The final sample was primarily male (70%), married (72%), and

parent of at least one child (74%). Most respondents were Caucasian (79%). The majority of

employees (88%) reported completing at least some college education. Seventy percent of

employees were between 25 and 54 years of age. In addition, 82% of respondents reported

that their houses had been damaged to at least some extent in the hurricane.

We ran an ANOVA to compare our sample with respondents who only completed one

of the surveys to determine if the final sample was representative. Results showed that

respondents who answered both surveys and those who only responded to one of the surveys

differed in means on satisfaction with CPDR, perceived organizational support, somatic

complaints, age, gender, race, and income after Hurricane Katrina; but not on emotional

exhaustion, satisfaction with government, job demands after Hurricane Katrina, and degree of

damage. It should be noted that at the time of this survey, contract renewals with the

government agency were in the process. People who were not going to renew the contract

may have been less likely to respond, which might be the reason for the differences on our

study variables. Nonetheless, we also checked variances for the variables and found that

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[1] ANOVA analyses showed that compared with online participants, those who answered paper surveys were older, more likely to be male, sustained more damage to their homes during the disaster, but had less income and fewer job demands after Hurricane Katrina. They were also less satisfied with CDPR and perceived less organizational support, but they suffered similar emotional exhaustion and somatic complaints, and were similarly satisfied with the local government. As a robustness check, we analyzed the data without the 44 paper surveys and results were similar (i.e., the relationship we proposed in Figure 1 still holds, though the standardized coefficients slightly differed).

participants who responded to both surveys reported equal or smaller variances than those who only responded to one survey on most of the key constructs (i.e., satisfaction with CPDR: SD = 1.47 vs. 1.66, F = 12.39, p < .01; POS:SD = 1.34 vs. 1.50, F = 10.53, p < .01; and somatic complaints: SD = 1.30 vs. 1.27, F = .08, n.s.), except for emotional exhaustion(SD = 1.74 vs. 1.58, F = 5.15, p < .05). With smaller variances, it is a more conservative test. If we can still find results with conservative test, our results will be more robust.

Measures

  Satisfaction with CDPR. This construct refers to the perception that the organization has acted appropriately and effectively in assisting employees after a disaster. As this construct has not been previously measured, we composed three items based on its definition. In addition, we interviewed several victims of Hurricane Katrina and asked them what they thought about their employers' disaster relief actions to further validate that the items reflected employee reactions. We went through several versions of the items with content experts before they were finalized. These items were: "I am satisfied with the way that my employer responded to Hurricane Katrina;" "My employer did everything that it could have in response to Hurricane Katrina;" and "My employer took care of its employees' needs resulting from Hurricane Katrina."(1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*; α = .92).

  Perceived organizational support. We used the eight-item scale from Rhoades, Eisenberger, and Armeli(2001) to measure perceived organizational support. An example item is "My organization really cares about my well-being" (1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*; α= .93).

Emotional exhaustion. We used the three-item measure from Boswell, Olson-Buchanan, and LePine (2004), which was based on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1986), to assess employees' emotional exhaustion. These items included "I feel emotionally drained from my work;" "I feel burned out from my work;" and "I feel exhausted when I think about having to face another day on the job" (1 = *Never* to 7 = *Very Often*; α = .92).

Somatic complaints. We used six items adapted from Cooke and Rousseau (1984) and Spector, Dwyer, and Jex (1988) to measure employees' somatic complaints. Employees were asked how they generally felt in the following way, such as "Find it difficult to get up in the morning," and "feel spells of dizziness" (1 = *Not at All* to 7 = *Very Much So*; α = .85). The Appendix lists full scales for the above four constructs.

Control variables. Because the data were collected from four different employers, we created three dummy variables (i.e., Organization 1, Organization 2, and Organization 3) to control for firms. We also controlled for demographic variables in the analyses, including employees' gender (1 = Male, 0 = Female), age (1 = 24 and under, 2 = 25-34, 3 = 35-44, 4 = 45-54, 5 = 55-64, and 6 = 65 and over), race (1 = Caucasian; 0 = Non-Caucasian), and family income after Hurricane Katrina (1 = \$1,199/month or below, 2 = \$1,200-2,399/month, 3 = \$2,400-3,999/month, 4 = \$4,000-6,399/month, and 5 = \$6,400/month or above). These variables could influence personal experiences and their ability to cope following a natural disaster and have been controlled for in previous studies due to their potential effect on reactions toward the workplace (e.g., Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999).

Job demands have been found to be a critical determinant of employee strain (e.g.,

Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). Thus, we

also controlled for employees' reported job demands after Hurricane Katrina with a five-item

scale drawn from Quinn et al. (1971). A sample item is "How often does your job require you

to work very fast?" (1 = *Never*, 7 = *Always*; α = .88). In addition, given the potential for

resources provided by external agencies to influence an individual's strain, we controlled for

employees' satisfaction with the local government, measured by a six-item scale fromVan

Ryzin(2004). A sample items is "Local government here does a good job of meeting my needs

and the needs of my family"(1 = *Strongly Disagree* to 7 = *Strongly Agree*; α= .91). Lastly, the

degree of damage to a respondent's home (1 = *No Damage* to 7 = *Complete Destruction*)was

controlled for because employees' feelings of strain is likely a function of the amount of

damage they experienced and have to deal with before, during, and after work. Among our

participants, 92.7% experienced at least minor damage to their homes, and 55.8%

experienced significant, major, or complete damage to their homes. Although including these

critical factors as control variables arguably provides a quite conservative test of our

hypotheses, by doing so we are able to isolate the specific role of an employer's response and

perceived support in influencing employees' experience of strain.

RESULTS

Before testing our hypotheses, we investigated the convergent and discriminant

validity of our focal constructs (satisfaction with corporate disaster response, perceived

organizational support, emotional exhaustion, and somatic complaints). We conducted a

series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA).Results of our hypothesized four-factor model

in Table 1 showed that all standardized loading estimates were higher than .50 for all items of

the four constructs, except for one item for somatic complaints, with a loading of .47.In

addition, the average variance extracted (AVE, a measure of the variance captured by each

construct, Fornell & Larcker, 1981) for satisfaction with CPDR, perceived organizational

support, emotional exhaustion, and somatic complaints was .79, .62, .81, and .50 respectively,

equal to or larger than the recommended cutoff value of .50 to establish convergent validity

(Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Composite construct reliabilities were adequate, ranging from .66

to .83. The composite reliability for somatic complaints was .66, a bit lower than .70, but still

acceptable. Taken together, these results suggest that the four focal constructs in our study

had good convergent validity.

In the test for discriminant validity, CFA results in Table 2 showed that our

hypothesized four-factor model provided a better fit to the data (χ^2/df = 3.24, CFI = .96; NFI

= .94; IFI = .96; TLI = .95; RMSEA = .06)than the other alternative models, and the fit

indices were acceptable based on recommended cutoff values (Hu & Bentler, 1999). In

addition, the change from the three-factor model to the four-factor model was significant ($\Delta\chi^2$

= 964.02, Δdf = 3, *p*< .01). AVE for each construct was well above the square of

corresponding inter-construct correlation estimates, or the shared variance between constructs

(Fornell & Larcker, 1981), which ranged from .01 to .37. In other words, the measurement

items have more in common with the construct they are associated with than they do with the

other constructs. Overall, the four focal constructs in our study achieved both convergent and

discriminant validity.[2]

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[2]To further validate our measure of satisfaction with CPDR, we also conducted a CFA on satisfaction with
CPDR, satisfaction with local government, and affective commitment to the employer (collected in the large
dataset and measured by Meyer, Allen, and Smith's (1993)six-item scale, α =.89). Results show that the three-
factor model yielded a better fit (χ^2/df = 3.66, CFI = .99; NFI = .99; IFI = .99; TLI = .99; RMSEA = .06) than

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Insert Table 1 and Table 2 about here.

Testing Hypotheses

Table 3 displays the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the study

variables. We tested our hypotheses with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with latent

constructs in AMOS 17.0.We first analyzed the hypothesized model in Figure 1, which

proposes that satisfaction with CPDR is positively related to perceived organizational

support, and the latter is in turn negatively related to employees' emotional exhaustion at

work and their somatic complaints. Because of the high correlation between the dummy

control variables, Organization 1 and Organization 2 (Table 1, $r = -.56$, $p< .01$), and between

Organization 1 and Organization 3 (Table 1, $r = -.59$, $p< .01$), these two correlations were

added to the hypothesized model, as the modification indices suggested. In addition, as we

tested the indirect effects with bootstrapping procedures, missing values were replaced

through multiple imputation (Rubin, 1987). To simplify the figure, we omitted the control

variables from Figure 1.

Fit indices for the model were adequate (χ^2/df =2.77, $p< .01$; CFI = .92; NFI = .88; IFI

= .92; TLI = .91; RMSEA = .05). Path coefficients are depicted in Figure 1.Satisfaction with

CPDR was positively related to perceived organizational support ($\beta = .61$, $p< .01$), supporting

Hypothesis 1. Perceived organizational support in turn was negatively related to emotional

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the two-factor and one-factor models. This provides additional evidence of discriminant validity for the
construct of satisfaction with CPDR.

exhaustion at work (β = -.31, p< .01) and somatic complaints (β = -.13, p< .01), thus supporting Hypotheses 2a and 2b. Finally, we found an indirect effect of satisfaction with CPDR on emotional exhaustion and somatic complaints, mediated by perceived organizational support. Based on the bootstrapping procedure (Preacher & Hayes, 2008; Zhao, Lynch, & Chen, 2010), the indirect effect for emotional exhaustion was -.22,with a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval (CI) of (-.30, -.16). The indirect effect for somatic complaints was -.07, with a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap CI of (-.13, -.02). It should be noted that there were no direct effects between satisfaction with CPDR and emotional exhaustion and somatic complaints. These results suggest a full mediation process. Thus, Hypotheses 3a and 3b were both supported. Finally, squared multiple correlation (SMC) or the variance explained for perceived organizational support, emotional exhaustion, and somatic complaints were .37, .25, and .13 respectively. As a robustness check, we also tested our hypotheses in PROCESS (Hayes, 2013). Results were quite similar. So only results from SEM were reported above.

Insert Figure 1 about here.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact that employers can have on the strain of their employees in the aftermath of a natural disaster. Results revealed that employees' satisfaction with CPDR was positively related to perceived organizational support, which in turn was negatively related to their emotional exhaustion and somatic

complaints. In addition, we showed that perceived organizational support fully mediated the relationships between satisfaction with CPDR and employee emotional exhaustion and somatic complaints. Below, the theoretical and practical implications of these findings are discussed.

Theoretical Contribution

Compassionate acts aimed to ease the hardship of others can take many forms (e.g., Lilius et al., 2008) and we conceptualize CPDR as a particular kind of compassionate response to human suffering. Research on CPDR generally focuses on employers' corporate social responsibility in aiding distant victims who have been affected by disasters. Here, we attempt to add to this growing literature by examining how employers' compassionate organizing influence perceived organizational support and help their own employees deal with stressors external to the workplace, and subsequently, reducing employees' psychological and physiological strain. Employers' CPDR is important as it helps their employees restore resources. But more importantly, such compassionate action also builds the employer's capacity to be better prepared for future uncertainty (e.g., Lilius, Worline, Dutton, Kanov, & Maitlis, 2011 ; Madden et al., 2012; McClelland &Vogus, 2014). When employees are satisfied with CPDR, they are certain that when a similar stressful situation arises, their employer will have the resource and ability to conduct compassionate organizing and aid them.

As such, we also contribute to positive organizational scholarship. We offer new insights to the compassionate organizing literature by showing how the appraisal of an employer's actions relates to employee perceptions and strain. In particular, we draw

attention to the fact that employee assessments of the compassionate actions taken by the employer are important. Given the unpredictability of some government agencies, employees may increasingly come to expect compassionate acts by their employers. Our findings suggest that employers that provide a satisfactory response after the devastation of a natural disaster could help lessen employee strain via strengthened employee perceptions of organizational supportiveness.

We support the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and extend it to the context of employer support provided in response to a natural disaster. Within the context of a natural disaster, this study replicates and extends prior research that has demonstrated a negative relationship between perceived organizational support and emotional exhaustion (Jawahar et al., 2007). Specifically, employers that aid their employees to cope with a natural disaster are more likely to be perceived by their employees through a positive lens as providing proper support and helping restore resource loss (Hobfoll, 1989).

Practical Implications

Our findings offer important practical insights for managers and employers. In times of uncertainty such as those following a natural disaster, organizational responsiveness could play a critical role in helping to mitigate both employees' psychological and physiological strain. Our findings echo calls for more research on the effects of corporate social responsibility actions on employees' work attitudes (Mueller, Hattrup, Spiess, & Lin-Hi, 2012; Turker, 2009).Employer responses to a disaster and provision of support to their employees are consistent with the numerous efforts to promote corporate social responsibility, or an organization's responsibility to set policies, make decisions, and take

actions that benefit the whole society (Bower, 1953). Although employers have donated a

substantial amount of resources to people in different parts of the world who have been

affected by a disaster (e.g., Muller & Whiteman, 2009), our study underscores that employers

are not only responsible for their shareholders, customers, and large community, but also

their own employees (Waddock, Bodwell, & Graves, 2002). These stakeholders are all

important for the sustainable success of the organization (Waddock et al., 2002).

Additionally, compassionate organizing may have long-term benefits as well. Organizations

that respond compassionately to a single event may build the capacity to respond to future

events (Madden, Duchon, Madden, Plowman, 2012). This may be especially important for

organizations that are positioned in locales that are likely to be repeatedly struck by a natural

disaster such as the Gulf region during the hurricane season.

In fact, disasters may lead to diminished resources to the employer as well (e.g., less

revenue, fewer jobs, reduced profit), which may sensitize employees with regard to how they

will be supported by the organization. For example, extreme budget cuts led Tulane

University to lay off 230 professors, more than 2,000 instructors and staff, and cut several

programs (MSNBC, 2005). Situations like this severely influence employees' psychological

and physiological strain. As such, in the midst of budget cuts and job insecurity, employers

could provide compassionate and philanthropic actions to increase remaining employees'

perceptions of organizational support. Such response could be costly monetarily, but, as our

results show, the employer can get valuable returns by enhancing employee affective

reactions and reducing feelings of strain.

Our results indicate that employers can play a potentially important role to both the

emotional and physiological strain of employees, even beyond that of their own work (e.g., job demands) and personal experiences (e.g., home damage) and the role of government. This should be especially important to employers given the relationship between strain, job performance, and various work withdrawal behaviors (e.g., Halbesleben, & Bowler, 2007; Witt et al., 2004; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998).There are many ways that organizations can help their own employees endure severe natural disasters, such as allowing affected employees to use organizational amenities or help relocate employees to safe areas. Employers with affected employees may be in an important position to provide their employees with necessary resources. For example, Shepherd and Williams (2014) examined people in the community (i.e., locals) who have suffered themselves but work together to aid the suffering of other victims of a natural disaster. They suggested that locals who are experiencing the dire effects of a particular disaster may have more specialized knowledge about what exactly the victims of a disaster need than non-locals, and thus may be better able to provide customized resources.

Limitations and Future Research

As with all research, the current study has limitations that should be noted. Although we collected our data in two phases (two months apart) to reduce the problems associated with common method variance (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) and give greater confidence in the direction of the effects, some study variables were collected at the same time. In particular, satisfaction with CPDR and perceived organizational support were both collected during phase 1. This weakens the causal argument that satisfaction with CPDR drives perceived organizational support. Although our

conceptual arguments and findings supported the causal link, a multi-phase longitudinal study is needed in the future to strengthen interpretation of these causal relationships. Further, it is possible that those with emotional exhaustion and somatic complaints experienced lower levels of perceived organizational support and satisfaction with CPDR rather than vice versa, leaving open the possibility for reverse causality. We conducted additional analyses to test a reverse causal model (i.e., emotional exhaustion and somatic complaints lead to satisfaction with CPDR, mediated by perceived organizational support).Results show that emotional exhaustion had an indirect effect on satisfaction with CPDR through perceived organizational support (the indirect effect was -.20, with a 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence interval (CI) of (-.27, -.14)). However, the fact that emotional exhaustion was collected in phase 2 makes the above finding less meaningful. In addition, previous studies also showed that POS could decrease employee emotional exhaustion (e.g., Jawahar, et al., 2007).A few studies that examined the negative consequences of emotional exhaustion found that emotional exhaustion decreased organizational commitment, job performance, and helping behaviors, and increased turnover intentions (Cropanzano, et al., 2003), but there has not been studies showing emotional exhaustion leading to decreased POS. Yet according to the attribution theory (Kelly, 1967), it is possible that when people are suffering from emotional exhaustion and somatic complaints, they tend to blame it to their environment, such as their employers not supporting them. In order to fully explore the causality of this research, a well-designed longitudinal study will be needed.

As we focused on employee perceptions regarding the employer's response to the disaster, it would be valuable to examine what drives employee variance in reported

satisfaction. What in particular can employers do to satisfy the needs of their employees? Are there certain organizational actions (e.g., monetary vs. counseling vs. time off) that are most likely to facilitate positive reactions from employees? For example, it has been demonstrated that the extent to which an employer's charitable giving after a disaster will be well received by the public depends on the perceived motivation underlying the disaster response (e.g., Fernando, 2007; 2010; Patten, 2008). Similarly, employees may consider how the employer has treated them in the past when assessing their level of satisfaction with CPDR. Actions taken by employers to help employees may be considered to be disingenuous if the behavior is inconsistent with how they have been previously treated. Further, it would be interesting to investigate the effect of perceived insincerity in an employer's disaster response, such as helping employees in order to boost the firm's reputation. Perceiving the disaster response in such a way may even hurt, instead of enhance, employees' work attitudes and/or feelings of well-being, compared with no disaster response from the employer. We recommend that future research seek to better understand specific practices and motivational process in how employer disaster response efforts effect employees' perceptions and subsequent attitudes and behaviors.

While we focused specifically on the role of employers in helping to reduce employee emotional exhaustion and somatic symptoms in the aftermath of a natural disaster, the support of employees' family and friends is also important. Research has shown that social support can reduce employee emotional exhaustion (e.g., Russell, Altmaier, & Van Velzen, 1987). Future studies may explore the interplay between support from inside and outside the workplace to gain a more complete picture of factors that reduce employee strain. Further, we

encourage future research to investigate the underlying mechanisms linking satisfaction with CPDR to perceived organizational support and ultimately to reduced strain. Our data suggest that perceived organizational support explains the relationship between satisfaction with CPDR and strain; yet more work is needed to understand the different types of work and non-work stressors and resources that employees may experience after a natural disaster and the specific role that perceived organizational support may play in mitigating strain.

A last but not least issue we should note is the limitation of our sample. The comparison between our final sample (i.e., participants who answered both surveys) and those who only answered the phase 1 or phase 2 survey showed that there were some differences between the two groups on key study constructs. Further analysis showed that compared with those who only answered one survey, the final sample had smaller variances on key constructs. Yet findings still support our hypotheses with such conservative test. Nonetheless, future studies that could replicate our findings are needed to validate and generalize our findings.

Finally, we used a short measure to operationalize the construct of satisfaction with CPDR. In future studies, we should follow a more strict scale development procedure to ensure that the full domain of the construct is covered.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research examined the links between employees' satisfaction with CPDR, perceived organizational support, and employee psychological and physiological strain. Findings from this study expand our understanding of how an employer's response to events residing beyond the organizational context can influence employee perceptions of the

employer. Extending the line of research about employers' conduct after natural disasters

(e.g., Muller & Whiteman, 2009), we demonstrated that employers can play an important role

in shaping perceptions and emotional experiences and ultimately help reduce the negative

consequences experienced by employees facing external stressors such as a natural disaster.

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Appendix. Measurement items for key study variables

Satisfaction with CDPR:

1. I am satisfied with the way that my employer responded to Hurricane Katrina.
2. My employer did everything that it could have in response to Hurricane Katrina.
3. My employer took care of its employees' needs resulting from Hurricane Katrina.

Perceived organizational support (Rhoades, et al., 2001):

1. [My employer] really cares about my well-being.
2. [My employer] strongly considers my goals and values.
3. [My employer] is willing to help me if I need a special favor.
4. [My employer] shows little concern for me. (reverse coded)
5. Help is available from [My employer] when I have a problem.
6. [My employer] would forgive an honest mistake on my part.
7. If given the opportunity, [My employer] would take advantage of me. (reverse coded)
8. [My employer] cares about my opinions.

Emotional exhaustion (Boswell, et al., 2004):

1. I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. I feel burned out from my work.
3. I feel exhausted when I think about having to face another day on the job.

Somatic complaints (Cooke & Rousseau, 1984; Spector, Dwyer, & Jex, 1988):

1. Find it difficult to get up in the morning.
2. Become very tired in a short time (i.e., fatigue).
3. Feel nervous or fidgety and tense.
4. Feel spells of dizziness.
5. Have trouble sleeping at night.
6. Have an upset stomach or stomach ache.

Table 1.CFA Factor Loadings (FL), Squared Multiple Correlation (SMC), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) Values of Study Variables

	FL	SMC	CR	AVE
Satisfaction with CDPR			.82	.79
Item 1	.89	.78		
Item 2	.90	.81		
Item 3	.87	.76		
Perceived Organizational Support			.83	.62
Item 1	.90	.81		
Item 2	.88	.78		
Item 3	.78	.61		
Item 4	.80	.64		
Item 5	.73	.54		
Item 6	.62	.39		
Item 7	.76	.57		
Item 8	.79	.62		
Emotional Exhaustion			.79	.81
Item 1	.87	.75		
Item 2	.94	.88		
Item 3	.89	.79		
Somatic Complaints			.66	.50
Item 1	.72	.52		
Item 2	.80	.64		
Item 3	.78	.60		
Item 4	.59	.35		
Item 5	.66	.44		
Item 6	.66	.44		

Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analyses on Study Constructs

	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	NFI	IFI	TLI	RMSEA
One-factor model	4583.06	170	26.96	.52	.51	.52	.40	.19
Two-factor model	2364.21	169	13.99	.76	.75	.76	.70	.14
Three-factor model	1496.08	167	8.96	.86	.84	.86	.82	.11
Four-factor model	532.06	164	3.24	.96	.94	.96	.95	.06

Note.The four-factor model is the basic hypothesized measurement model. In the three-factor model, satisfaction with CPDR and perceived organizational support were combined because of their high correlation (r = .51, p< .01). In the two-factor model, satisfaction with CPDR and perceived organizational support were combined into one factor, and emotional exhaustion and somatic complaints were combined into the second factor because of their high correlation (r = .50, p< .01). Finally, in the one-factor model, all the four variables were combined into one factor.

Table 3. Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations of Study Variables

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Org. 1	.74	.44													
2. Org. 2	.10	.30	- .56**												
3. Org. 3	.11	.31	- .59**	- .12**											
4. Gender	.70	.46	.06	- .01	-.08*										
5. Age	3.63	1.22	- .01	.02	.02	.16**									
6. Race	.81	.40	- .06	- .01	.09*	.06	.03								
7. Income	3.87	1.05	.12**	- .05	- .01	.22**	.21**	.13**							
8. Job demands	4.54	.85	.10**	- .07	- .01	- .03	- .06	.04	.12**						
9. Sat. with Gov.	3.42	1.26	- .26**	.16**	.12**	.02	.09*	.08*	.03	- .01					
10. Damage	4.06	1.86	- .03	.02	- .01	- .07†	.20**	- .09*	- .07†	.04	- .18**				
11. Sat. with CPDR	5.53	1.46	.01	.01	- .08*	- .17**	.06	.03	.14**	.18**	.14**	- .05			
12. POS	4.71	1.34	.05	- .01	- .18**	- .16**	- .05	.05	.13**	.13**	.15**	- .07	.57**		
13. Emotional exhaustion	3.59	1.73	.12**	- .03	- .03	.07†	- .02	.07†	- .03	.17**	- .20**	.01	-.18**	-.32**	
14. Somatic complaints	2.94	1.34	.13**	- .06	- .08*	- .08*	- .15**	.05	- .14**	.04	- .26**	.09**	-.08*	-.14*	.52**

Notes.N = 695;

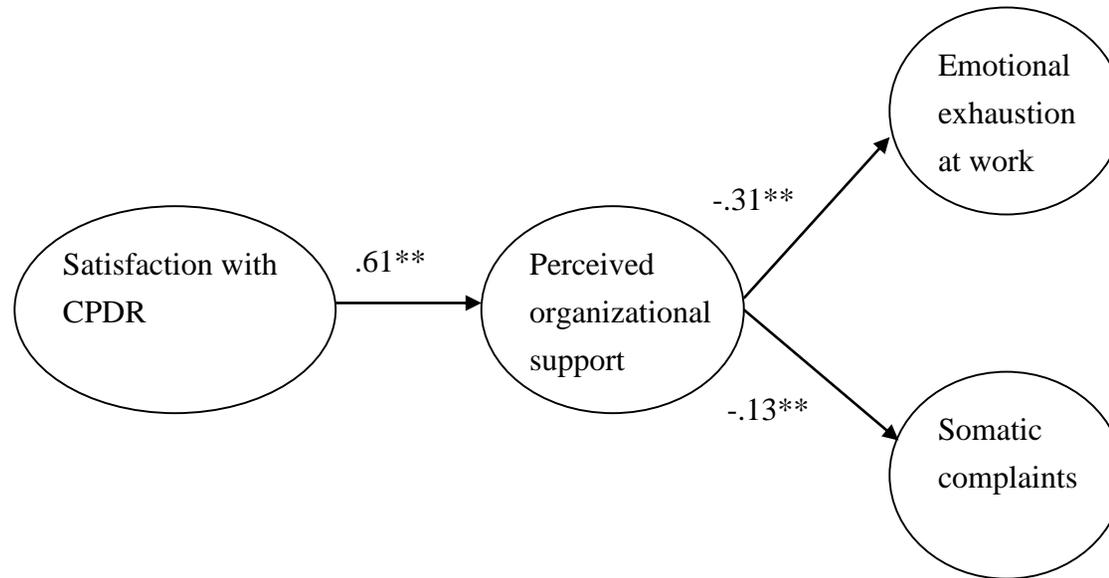**p< .01; *p< .05; †p< .10;

Gender was coded 1 = male, 0 = female;

Race was coded 1 = white, 0 = non-white;

7. Income: Family income after Hurricane Katrina;

8. Job demands: Job demands after Hurricane Katrina;

9. Sat. with Gov.: Satisfaction with local government;

11. Sat. with CPDR: Satisfaction with CPDR.

Figure 1. Estimates of Path Coefficients in the Full Mediation Model

Notes. ** *p* < .01.Standardized coefficients are listed. Item-level indicators are omitted from the figure for presentation clarity. All factor loadings (not pictured) were significant at the .01 level. Control variables were also omitted from the figure.