Gender Differences in Perceived Levels of Resiliency One Year Post Disaster: Associations with Trust in Various Government Entities
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INTRODUCTION

- Gender differences in post-disaster dysfunction (i.e., depression and PTSD) have been noted (Andrews et al., 2000; Simmons & Nelson, 2005).
- Yet, gender differences in perceived wellness, adaptive coping, and resilience post-disaster have been understudied (Bonanno et al., 2006; Norris et al., 2007).
- Furthermore, the relations between trust of important government and business entities and perceived resilience is unknown.
- The current study proposes to fill that gap by considering gender differences in the associations between perceived trust and self-reported resiliency one-year after the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill Disaster.

HYPOTHESES

1. Men were expected to report higher levels of perceived post-disaster resilience than women.
2. Respondents were expected to report higher levels of trust for local entities.
3. Gender differences were expected in the associations between trust in various entities and self-reported resiliency.

METHOD

- A sample of 812 (63.9% female, 36.1% male) residents of Mobile and Baldwin counties in Alabama participated in this study. The following age groups were included in the study: 19-30 (2.8%), 31-50 (17.2%), 51-70 (52.1%), and 71 and older (24%).
- Participants completed a 20-minute telephone survey conducted by a USA polling group.
- Trust was measured by responses regarding how trustworthy participants perceived organizational authorities (1 = no trust, 5 = a lot of trust).
- Trust in five entities was assessed (BP, local government, state government, federal government, and federal court).
- Resiliency was measured by two items: 1) I tend to recover from setbacks and 2) I adapt to changes well. Both statements were measured on a scale from 1 to 5 (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

RESULTS

- As predicted, men perceived themselves as significantly more resilient than women.
- Respondents of both sexes perceived BP as least trustworthy authority (M = 1.92).
- Respondents of both sexes perceived local government as most trustworthy (M = 3.33).
- Trust in BP was the only significant predictor of resilience for men.
- Trust in local community and state government were the strongest predictors of resilience for women.

DISCUSSION

- Men reported being significantly more resilient than women.
- For both sexes, local government authorities were the most trusted after the Deepwater Horizon Oil Spill. This suggests that these community agents could be better utilized in information dissemination post-disaster.
- Conversely, industry and federal authorities were the least trusted entities post-spill.
- Both, men and women’s resiliency was predicted by perceived trustworthiness of local authorities.
- Women’s perceived adaptability post-spill was also predicted by trust in state and federal authorities.
- These findings suggest that reducing cynicism toward governmental authorities can positively contribute to community member’s perceived adaptability in the face of a large scale disaster.