Perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility in a Post-Disaster Context: The Impact of CSR on Employee Trust and Identification

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Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become increasingly recognized for being a source of positive organizational outcomes. More specifically, CSR has been positively associated with employees experiencing higher levels of organizational trust and organizational identification. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship among these variables in a post-disaster context – the aftermath of Hurricane Ida. In such conditions, employers' CSR actions may be particularly salient to employees' perceptions of and attitudes toward their organization. Based on a set of quantitative and qualitative survey data in a sample of South Louisiana employees, our study finds evidence that organizations' CSR actions directed toward employees may be a stronger influence on employee trust and identification than actions taken to help the community. Implications for theory and practice and directions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: *corporate social responsibility, organizational trust, organizational identification*

INTRODUCTION

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become a popular topic among scholars and practitioners, with an increasing emphasis on the company's responsibilities to all its stakeholders (e.g., employees, community, society-at-large). Such stakeholder approaches to corporate activities are evident not only in the substantial scholarship on the subject (e.g., Wang, Zu, & Wang, 2020) but also corporate pledges to, for instance, "redefine the purpose of a corporation to promote an economy that works for all Americans," (Business Roundtable, 2019). This perspective on the responsibility of businesses is relatively new and increasing in influence, as evidenced by research from consulting firm Porter Novelli (2020), which found that "nearly nine-in-10 (88%) employees believe it is no longer acceptable for companies just to make money; companies must positively impact society as well." Additionally, "77% of consumers believe that companies should" do something to contribute to society, and "73% of consumers across the 15 largest markets in the world" would recommend a company that participates in CSR (Waples & Brachle, 2020, p. 872).

The current study views CSR through the eyes of a specific set of stakeholders – employees – in a context in which they are particularly vulnerable and in need of support, namely the aftermath of a devastating natural disaster. Much prior work has found positive relationships between perceived CSR

activities and positive workplace outcomes. For example, perceived CSR is associated with organizational trust (Farooq et al., 2019), identification (Kim et al., 2010; Jones, 2010), job satisfaction (Glavas & Kelley, 2014), engagement (Chaudhary, 2019), commitment (Kim et al., 2010), and organizational citizenship behaviors (Jones, 2010). Despite the expansive empirical literature on CSR, Wang, and colleagues (2020) point out that one of the outstanding questions in this literature is whether social exchange (Blau, 1964) or social identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; May et al., 2021) mechanisms better explain the relationships between perceived CSR and employee attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. The current study seeks to examine this question by probing the differential effects that corporations engaged in CSR activities toward their employees and their communities have on employees' trust in and identification with their employers.

With this in mind, the current study has three goals: (1) to examine the psychological impacts of employees' perceived CSR on their levels of organizational trust and identification in a post-disaster context, (2) to clarify the relative importance of social exchange-based factors vs. social identity factors for explaining these relationships, and (3) to provide practical guidance to organizations making decisions about how to react when employees face challenges in the wake of a natural disaster. While our findings represent preliminary results from a relatively small sample, the combined quantitative and qualitative evidence suggests that – at least in a post-disaster context – exchange relationships with employees are most important in shaping employees' perceptions of and attitudes toward their employer. Specifically, we find that CSR activities directed toward employees are much more likely to result in positive changes to employees' identification and trust than activities aimed at helping the broader community. Further, based on our analysis of the qualitative data we collected, failing to support and take care of employees during the aftermath of a natural disaster can negatively impact employees' perceptions of their company. In addition to discussing our findings, we also provide a discussion of practical and theoretical implications and identify some directions for future research.

BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Conceptualizing CSR

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) can be defined as "corporate behaviors that aim to affect stakeholders positively, and that go beyond its economic interest" (Turker, 2009, p. 413). It can also be defined as organizational actions and policies that consider the expectations of stakeholders and "the triple bottom line of economic, social, and environmental performance" (Wang et al., 2020, p. 1). Such conceptualizations of CSR suggest that companies can have a range of responsibilities, such as economic, legal, ethical, or philanthropic (Carroll, 1991). Traditionally, companies have focused primarily on their economic responsibilities i.e., the business's responsibility to be profitable and maximize shareholder value (Carroll, 1991). In the last few decades, companies have increasingly recognized the importance of doing what is best for many stakeholders beyond the company's shareholders (Stobierski, 2021b). This trend is demonstrated by the widespread uptake of CSR reporting, with an estimated 90 percent of companies on the S&P 500 index publishing a CSR report in 2019, compared to just 20 percent in 2011 (Stobierski, 2021a). As CSR becomes an expectation, it creates a broader range of responsibilities and expectations from customers, employees, community members, and others. Engagement in CSR activities, or failure to engage in these activities, can have important effects on how employees perceive their company and impact employees' attitudes and behaviors (Wang et al., 2020). This may be especially true in the context under examination in this study, i.e., the immediate aftermath of a natural disaster.

Organizations must decide if and how they will react when natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, tornados, earthquakes, and wildfires occur. These kinds of disasters allow companies to participate in CSR activities directed toward their employees or the community. Effectively responding to natural disasters has become more challenging and expensive over time, yet the amount of aid from the government and aid agencies has stayed the same, and private firms are increasingly expected to be part of addressing this gap (Ballesteros et al., 2017). Additionally, disaster relief from government agencies is not always "reliable, available, or expedient" (Watkins et al., 2015, p. 437). Private companies have become crucial contributors to disaster relief by providing essential supplies, funds, and volunteers to areas in need (Zhao et al., 2015).

After a hurricane, firms can help their employees by reimbursing them for gas or providing gas, providing meals, allowing for flexible work hours or additional time off, and ensuring they are compensated. Support from organizations can play an important role in helping "mitigate both employees' psychological and physiological strain" (Watkins et al., 2015, p. 450). Organizations can also help the community by donating supplies, making a monetary contribution, providing meals for the community, or volunteering to help with clean-up. When firms make these contributions, disaster aid arrives quicker, and the area can recover more fully (Ballesteros et al., 2017). Because immediate disaster aid allows the community to return to normalcy quicker, it benefits businesses since people can continue purchasing goods and services from them (Johnson et al., 2011). It also benefits the company by enhancing its "business reputation and mutual relationship with employees, customers, and communities" (Mahmud et al., 2021, p.13). In short, natural disasters such as hurricanes create opportunities for businesses to strengthen (or damage) relationships with employees and community members through their CSR activities (or the failure to engage in such activities).

CSR can be conceptualized at several levels of analysis, and its multiple dimensions can be categorized in different ways. For instance, conceptualizations at the institutional level of analysis often focus on dimensions related to the "triple bottom line" of CSR performance (i.e., economic, social, and environmental: Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). In the case of this study, we focus on the individual level of analysis, specifically examining how employees' perceptions of their organization's CSR activities influence important work attitudes. To this end, we use Turker's (2009a) conceptualization, which focuses on the stakeholders or beneficiaries of organizational CSR activities. Turker (2009a) found four dimensions of CSR with four distinct categories of stakeholder: society, customers, employees, and the government. While related, each of these dimensions is distinct, and may have differential effects on employee psychological outcomes. For instance, Turker (2009b) found that CSR to society, CSR to customers, and CSR to employees explained variance in employees' affective commitment to their organization, but CSR to the government did not. For this study, we will focus on CSR to employees (CSR-Employee) and CSR to society (CSR-society) as these dimensions are most relevant to our research questions and the context of our study.

Indeed, CSR has been empirically linked with various positive organizational outcomes. Prior research has shown that perceived CSR is positively related to a range of positive employee attitudinal and behavioral outcomes, as detailed in a recent meta-analysis by Wang and colleagues (Wang et al., 2020). The current study will focus on two of these outcomes: organizational trust and organizational identification. Trust represents the extent to which an employee is willing to be vulnerable to the actions of their employer, based on the expectation that their employer will perform certain actions important to them (Paliszkiewicz et al., 2014). Organizational identification represents a process by which an individual incorporates their perception of oneself as a member of a particular organization into their general self-definition (Riketta et al., 2004). While significant prior empirical research has demonstrated a connection between CSR and organizational trust and identification, prior authors have indicated that questions remain about these relationships' mechanisms and boundary conditions.

CSR to Employees and Organizational Trust and Identification

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) and social identity theory (Tajfel et al., 1979; Ashforth & Mael, 1989) are among the most frequently invoked theoretical perspectives used to explain the relationships between CSR and organizational trust (Jones, 2010) and identification (Kim et al., 2010). One of the fundamental principles of social exchange theory is the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), the idea that relationships are based on mutual trust and that benefits will be exchanged between parties. That is, when an individual receives benefits from another party, they feel an obligation to reciprocate. At a fundamental level, the employer-employee relationship represents an example of an economic exchange in which the employee agrees to provide labor for compensation. However, such relationships may also be considered social exchange relationships, in which partners exchange symbolic and/or intangible benefits (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2004). In employment relationships, employees may have expectations of their employer that go beyond simple economic transactions. For instance, research has shown that employees look favorably upon organizations that fulfill implicit promises (e.g., job

security, training, and development: Coyle-Shapiro & Neumann, 2004) and show that they genuinely care about their employees' well-being (Eisenberger et al., 2001).

This may be especially true in the aftermath of a natural disaster. When employees are at their most vulnerable, the organization has an opportunity to provide resources that carry deep symbolic meaning. Providing resources such as food, water, ice, or fuel, or simply allowing employees some time off from work to clean up storm-damaged homes or meet with insurance adjusters, shows employees that their employer cares about their well-being. Such activities, which we characterize as CSR to employees, are likely to engender trust with employees as they symbolically demonstrate that the organization cares about them and their well-being in difficult times. Thus, we expect CSR employees to be positively associated with organizational trust.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a positive relationship between CSR to employees and organizational trust.

CSR to employees may also impact employees' identification with the organization. Upon receiving such benefits from their employer, employees may develop a sense that they are valued by organizational leaders and "part of the family," so to speak. Insofar as employees feel this connection, they may be more likely to consider their organizational membership as part of their own identity. Thus, we would expect that CSR to employees will be related to higher levels of organizational identification.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a positive relationship between CSR to employees and organizational identification.

## CSR to Society/Community and Its Relationship to Employee Trust and Identification

CSR actions directed toward employees are not the only actions organizations can take in the aftermath of natural disasters. They may also provide assistance and resources to the community through various means. Companies can help the community by donating supplies, making a monetary contribution to disaster aid agencies, providing meals, or volunteering to help with clean-up. Social identity theory (Tajfel et al., 1979; Ashforth & Mael, 1989) has been used to explain the relationship between such actions and employee attitudes toward the organization (Kim et al., 2010; Van Knippenberg, Van Dick, & Tavares, 2007). Social identity theories suggest that employees may differ concerning the extent to which their membership in their organization is part of their self-concept (Van Knippenberg et al., 2007). Thus, employee evaluations of the value of belonging to the organization are important factors in their attitudes toward it. Organizations that engage in CSR activities directed toward the community demonstrate to employees that they care about serving the interests of their stakeholders (Yadav et al., 2018), and thus may be more deserving of their trust.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a positive relationship between CSR to society/community and organizational trust.

Such activities also improve the organization's reputation in the community and, in turn, influence employees' evaluations of their organizational membership. Kim and colleagues (2010), for instance, found that CSR activities enhance organizational identification by increasing perceived external prestige. As Jones (2010) found, employees' perceptions of CSR activities relate to the sense of pride they feel in their organization and, in turn, their level of organizational identification. This is consistent with a broad range of empirical evidence showing that CSR activities increase organizational identification (Berger et al., 2006; Collier & Esteban, 2007; Rodrigo & Arenas, 2008). Such arguments suggest that when their organization engages in CSR activities directed at supporting their community, they form positive evaluations of the value of their organizational membership and more strongly identify with their organization. In the post-disaster context, we expect to find similar results as employees may take pride in knowing that their firm is helping their friends and neighbors recover from a devastating natural disaster. Thus, we offer the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4: There will be a positive relationship between CSR to society/community and organizational identification.

FIGURE 1
CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF CSR AND ITS RELATIONS WITH ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST AND IDENTIFICATION
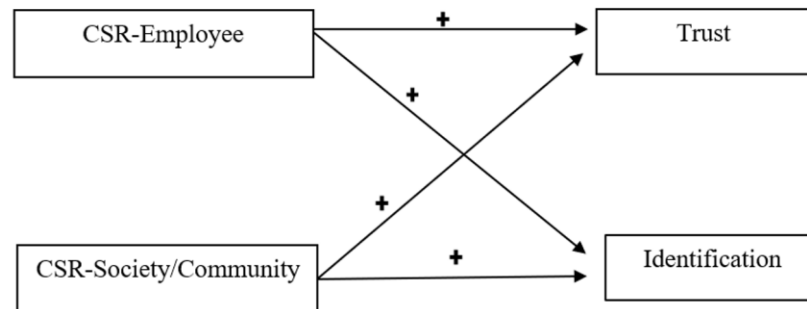
METHODS

Sample

The final sample for this study consisted of 77 individuals. All participants were employees residing in the state of Louisiana who lived in areas that were affected by Hurricane Ida. Participants were 65% female and ranged in age from 18 - 67 (M_{age} = 38.78, S.D. = 13.41).

Procedures

The survey was administered using Qualtrics, an online survey platform. The survey was administered electronically during February and March of 2022. The sampling method was a "snowball" method in which a link was sent to contacts of the authors, who were subsequently encouraged to pass along to their social networks. In addition, the author approached several local businesses to share the link with their employees. Initially, there were 110 survey responses recorded, but there were only 77 respondents who fully completed the survey by answering at least one item for all of the survey scales. Of the retained responses, 73 contained full data, and four respondents whose responses contained at least partial data for all scales were retained. Each participant was provided with a consent form at the beginning of the survey. By clicking at the bottom, they certified that they had read the information provided about consenting to participate, voluntarily agreed to participate, and were 18 years of age or older. Participants were able to stop taking the survey at any time. The survey also included three attention checks that asked the participants to select a certain response to ensure they were paying attention. No participants were removed due to failing attention checks.

Measures

Corporate Social Responsibility

CSR was measured with an adapted version of Turker's Corporate Social Responsibility scale (2009). We used the items relevant to CSR to Society and CSR to Employees because these were the relevant scales for this study. Because longitudinal data on employees' changes in perceptions of CSR could not be gathered, we used a retrospective-report approach to changes in employee perceptions based on the procedure detailed by Oltmanns et al. (2020). The level of CSR in society was measured with four items from the CSR scale (α = 0.86). The level of CSR to employees was measured with five items from the CSR scale (α = 0.9). To make the questions more relevant to the purpose of this research related to Hurricane Ida, items were adapted to ask participants to rate the extent to which each perception about their company increased, decreased, or stayed the same based on actions their company took or didn't take in the aftermath

of Hurricane Ida. For example, one item to measure CSR to employees states, "The extent to which my company implements flexible policies to provide a good work & life balance for its employees," and one item to measure CSR to society and the community states, "The extent to which my company supports nonprofit organizations working to provide hurricane-related relief." Participants were asked to read each item and select an answer on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 indicating that the perception decreased a lot, 2 indicating it decreased, 3 indicating it stayed the same, 4 indicating it increased, and 5 indicating it increased a lot.

Four open-ended questions were also asked and compared to the results from this CSR scale. These questions asked participants to describe what their employer did to help employees and the community after Hurricane Ida and explain whether or not those actions changed their view of their employer and in what way. For example, one set of questions states, "Please describe some of the actions your employer took to help employees in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida," followed by "Did these actions toward employees change your view of your employer? In what way? Please explain."

Organizational Trust

The next twelve questions came from Nyhan and Marlowe's (1997) Organizational Trust Inventory (α=0.97). This scale was used to measure the participant's level of trust in his or her supervisor and work organization. The first eight items in this scale ask participants to complete each statement by reading in the name of their supervisor in the first blank and selecting a number from a 7-point Likert scale with 1 being nearly zero, 2 being very low, 3 being low, 4 being 50/50, 5 being high, 6 being very high, 7 being near 100% that is closest to their opinion for the second blank. For example, one item states, "My level of confidence that _____ is technically competent at the critical elements of his or her job is ____." The last four items refer to the participant's department and the organization as a whole. For example, one item states "The level of trust among the people I work with on a regular basis is ____."

Organizational Identification

Organizational identification was measured with Johnson et al.'s (1999) Organizational Identification Questionnaire (α=0.97). Participants were asked to complete each statement by reading in the name of their organization in the blank space and indicate to what level they agreed or disagreed with the statement on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being strongly disagree, 2 being disagree, 3 being neither agree nor disagree, 4 being agree, and 5 being strongly agree. For example, one item from this scale states "I would probably continue working for _____ even if I didn't need the money." This scale also included 3 items that were reverse coded to function as attention checks. One of these items states, "I find it difficult to agree with _____'s policies on important matters relating to me."

Demographics

Finally, participants were asked a series of questions about demographic information including their gender, age, race, highest level of education completed, marital status, employment status, and job industry (see Appendix E for all demographic items).

RESULTS

The survey data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel and version 24 of IBM SPSS. Correlation and ordinary least squares regression analyses were used to evaluate the four hypotheses. Correlations for all four variables are reported in Table 1. Before conducting regression and correlation analyses, the scales were converted to the same standard unit of measurement by calculating the z-score of each variable.

TABLE 1
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND CORRELATIONS

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1) CSR-S/C	3.50	0.64			
2) CSR-Emp	3.33	0.93	0.57		
3) Org. Trust	5.21	1.16	0.43	0.54	
4) Org. Ident.	3.43	0.72	0.47	0.73	0.72

All correlations were significant ($p < .05$)

The correlations reported in Table 1 provide initial support for all four hypotheses. CSR-Employee is positively and significantly correlated with organizational trust ($r = 0.54$; $p < .05$) and organizational identification ($r = 0.73$; $p < .05$), providing support to H1 and H2. CSR-Society/Community is positively and significantly correlated with organizational trust ($r = 0.43$; $p < .05$) and organizational identification ($r = 0.47$; $p < .05$), providing support for H3 and H4.

The correlation table also showed a high correlation between the two independent variables, CSR-Employee and CSR-Society/Community ($r = 0.57$; $p < .05$). Because the independent variables were so highly correlated and because they are theoretically dimensions of the same higher-order construct (CSR), further testing was conducted to determine whether each of the independent variables explained unique variance in the dependent variables. A stepwise multiple regression was conducted in which each dependent variable was regressed onto CSR-Employee first, and then CSR-Society/Community was added in Step 2. CSR-Employee was entered into the model first based on its higher correlations with the dependent variables as recommended by Hair et al. (2010). As seen in Table 2, the regression coefficients for CSR-Employee to Trust ($\beta = .44$, $p < .05$) and CSR-Employee to Identification ($\beta = .687$, $p < .05$) were significant. However, when including CSR-Society/Community, neither of the coefficients was significant ($p > .05$), and CSR-Society/Community failed to explain unique variance in the dependent variables in either model ($\Delta r^2 = .02$ for Trust, $\Delta r^2 = .004$ for Identification). Based on these analyses, it appears that much of the correlation between CSR-Society/Community and outcomes was driven by its association with CSR-Employee. While the regression analysis provides further support for H1 and H2, it casts doubt on H3 and H4.

TABLE 2
RESULTS OF STEPWISE REGRESSIONS

	Step 1		Step 2	
DV: Org. Trust	β	t	β	t
Constant		.055		.066
1.) CSR-Employee	.54**	5.55**	.441	3.752**
2.) CSR-Society/Community	-	-	.173	1.475
ΔR²		.291**		.02
DV: Org. Identification				
Constant		.085		.090
1.) CSR-Employee	.731**	9.29	.687**	7.144**
2.) CSR-Society/Community	-	-	.078	.809
ΔR²		.535**		.004

** denotes $p < .01$

Qualitative Analysis

In an effort to further validate these findings and ensure that respondents understood what was being asked of them, the survey asked respondents to provide qualitative responses to some descriptive questions about what actions their employers took to help employees and the community after Hurricane Ida and whether this changed the way they view their employer. These questions ensured that respondents understood the distinctions between the different variables that they were being asked to evaluate changes in their perceptions and that the relationships observed in the quantitative data matched the descriptions of what they experienced.

Some respondents provided negative responses to the open-ended questions. For instance, one respondent stated, "I received no support from my employer" when asked to describe some of the actions their employer took to help employees in the aftermath of Hurricane Ida. When asked about how these actions (inactions) affected their perception of their employer, this respondent replied, "I was demoralized by the lack of support my company has provided in the last 2 years and following Ida." This respondent rated an average of 2.5 for CSR-Society/Community, 1.2 for CSR-Employee, 4.6 for Organizational Trust, and 2.1 for Organizational Identification. Compared to the means listed in Table 1, these averages are below the mean. These values also suggest that this employer's lack of support had a greater impact on how this employee identifies with the company than their trust toward the company since their average for organizational identification is 1.3 lower than the mean, and their average for organizational trust is only 0.6 lower than the mean. The low averages for both CSR variables also coincide with how the participant responded to the descriptive CSR questions, further validating the scale. Another participant wrote, "besides letting us stay home the day Ida hit, they didn't really do anything to help employees after," and then explained, "It made me even more discouraged than I already am. I felt underappreciated before and feel even more underappreciated now." This participant also stated that their employer-provided no help to the community that they could think of and explained that their view did not change because "I already have a negative view of my employer. Their lack of help toward the community didn't help my view." This participant rated averages of 2.5 for CSR-Society/Community, 1.4 for CSR-Employee, 3.6 for Organizational Trust, and 2 for Organizational Identification. These averages are fairly low compared to the means listed in Table 1. These values suggest that this employer's lack of help after the hurricane had a greater impact on this employee's level of trust since their average for organizational trust is 1.6 lower than the mean and their average for organizational identification is 1.4 lower than the mean.

Other participants provided positive responses to the open-ended questions. For instance, one respondent wrote that to help employees, the "owner & CEOs went to employee's houses to help with cleanup. We also have a foundation that is employee/company contributed that allowed the company to help many affected employees." When asked if this changed their view and in what way, they explained, "I heard about the foundation on my first day, but it was so nice to see it in action. It also made me believe in the company and our purpose, even more, when our CEO was out there helping the employees." This participant rated averages of 4.75 for CSR-Society/Community, 4.2 for CSR-Employee, 6 for Organizational Trust, and 4.1 for Organizational Identification. These averages are all above the means listed in Table 1. This respondent's high average for organizational trust suggests that having a foundation for CSR and getting top management, like CEOs to participate in CSR can increase employee trust. This relates to the idea that "for CSR to be successful, it needs a systemic process with top management commitment and support as well as the concerted and collective efforts of organizational members," (Lam & Khare, 2010, p. 4). When asked what their employer did to help employees, another participant wrote, "Even though our offices were severely damaged, employees were still able to come to work and serve the community. Those with bad house damages could get an extra week of personal time before returning to work." They then wrote that this "Changed my view positively. It shows that they truly care about all their employees. They could've easily shut the business down. Warehouses and buildings had to be gutted out completely. We could have all been out of jobs. No one was laid off. They pushed through the tough times and have gotten us back to normal at a very fast pace." When asked what their employer did to help the community, they wrote "As a large electrical company in our community, we were desperately needed after the storm. They never closed their doors," and then explained that this changed their view positively because

"They care so much for their employees and customers." This participant rated averages of 3.25 for CSR-Society/Community, 3.8 for CSR-Employee, 6.69 for Organizational Trust, and 3.69 for Organizational Identification. Compared to the means in Table 1, this participant's averages were above the mean for all variables except CSR-Society/Community. Their average for organizational trust was especially high.

One common theme in these qualitative responses was that many of those participants who said that their view of their employer did not change based on what their employer did after the hurricane said this because they had expected them to do those things. For instance, one participant said that their employer gave "a $5,000 relief bonus to everyone in the area" to help employees and that it did not change their view. They explained, "no, my employer has always been willing to help in any way they can. It was not a surprise to me that something like this was done." They also wrote that to help the community, their company "donated water to the hospital," and when asked if this changed their view they wrote "no, I expected it." This participant rated an average of 3 for CSR-Society/Community, which is slightly below the mean, 3.8 for CSR-Employee, which is above the mean, 3.9 for Organizational Trust, which is below the mean and 3.4 for Organizational Identification, which is equal to the mean. Another participant wrote that their employer-provided "Paid time to work from home, food, housing, etc." and then explained that their view didn't change "because they are always supportive of their employees in every matter." They also wrote that their employer "delivered food, water, materials" for the community and then explained that their view didn't change "because these are things we always do for our community." This participant rated an average of 3 for CSR-Society/Community, which is slightly below the mean, 3 for CSR-Employee, which is slightly below the mean, 6.5 on Organizational Trust, which is above the mean, and 4.3 on Organizational Identification, which is also above the mean. In this instance, this employee's expectation of their employer to participate in CSR may be correlated with their notably high level of organizational trust.

DISCUSSION

The aftermath of a natural disaster provides employers a unique opportunity to either develop, strengthen, or damage their relationship with their employees. The purpose of this study was to examine the question of how employers' post-disaster CSR actions toward employees and the community impact employees' attitudes of organizational trust and identification. The combined qualitative and quantitative findings in this study provide rich and robust evidence that – at least in the post-disaster context – directing resources toward employees is much more impactful than efforts to support the community at large. This is not to say such efforts are unimportant; however, organizations operating in the post-disaster context should be mindful of their obligations to their employees before they expend resources on community support. Ultimately, the study achieved its goals of: (1) examining the psychological impacts of employees' perceived CSR on their levels of organizational trust and identification in a post-disaster context, (2) clarifying the relative importance of social exchange-based factors vs. social identity factors for explaining these relationships, and (3) providing practical guidance to organizations making decisions about how to react when employees face challenges in the wake of a natural disaster. Much remains to be understood, and the limitations and recommendations for future research are also discussed.

Implications for Theory

This research contributes empirical support for the positive and significant relationships between perceived corporate social responsibility and employee organizational trust and identification (Wang et al., 2020). While this finding is unremarkable due to its consistency with considerable prior research, these results suggest that context plays an important role in the relationship between CSR and employee psychological outcomes. Specifically, in contexts in which employees may feel uniquely vulnerable and need support, i.e., the aftermath of a significant natural disaster, employees may have expectations of the types of CSR activities they expect their employers to enact. By studying these activities in this context, we have also provided some initial answers to one of the important unanswered questions in CSR research: whether CSR's positive impacts can best be explained by mechanisms of social exchange or social identity (Wang et al., 2020).

These findings show that CSR activities aimed at helping employees after a natural disaster may be a more effective method for building employee trust and identification than activities aimed at helping the community, suggesting that social exchange-based mechanisms may be a more powerful driver of employee attitudinal outcomes. This may be because direct aid to employees is more proximate to their experience and by extension their perceptions of their employer than activities aimed at helping the community. This is consistent with findings from Kim et al. (2010), who found that employees' participation in CSR activities was more directly linked to employees' organizational identification than employees' perceptions of CSR activities. The relationship between employees' perceptions of the organizations' CSR activities was mediated by perceived organizational prestige. Similarly, Jones (2010) found that organizational pride mediated this relationship. Thus, consistent with our findings, employees' direct experiences with CSR activities directly influence their perceptions of their relationship with the organization. While efforts aimed at helping a broader range of stakeholders in the community may be appreciated, employees may expect that their employers first "take care of their own" before making such community-wide efforts. Based on some of the qualitative findings of our study, future researchers may wish to further examine the mechanisms and boundary conditions of these relationships. Further, they may wish to consider other theoretical perspectives such as organizational justice, which may have implications for what employees expect that their organizations *should* do in the aftermath of a natural disaster and how failures to engage in CSR activities may breach the psychological contract. In addition, future researchers may wish to include a broader range of attitudinal (e.g., commitment, job satisfaction) and behavioral (e.g., OCBs, performance, turnover) outcomes, as there may be longer-term effects of employers' actions in the immediate aftermath of the disaster.

Implications for Practice

Businesses operating in areas prone to natural disasters face difficult choices in the aftermath of such a disaster. As leadership makes decisions about providing resources to employees and their communities, organizational leaders need to be mindful of their relationships with their employees. This study offers evidence suggesting practical steps organizational leadership may wish to take in the aftermath of a natural disaster. Specifically, employers may wish to implement CSR efforts directed toward their employees after a natural disaster occurs before they direct their efforts toward the community. As Van Knippenberg and colleagues (2007) point out, the psychological relationship between an individual and their employer is an increasingly important factor in modern organizations, transcending the simple economic exchange of labor for compensation (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). While providing aid to employees may not be part of the explicit employment contract, the actions an employer takes in the wake of a natural disaster matters to the social exchange relationship between employer and employee. Such actions represent a symbolic exchange (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005) which signals to employees that the organization cares about their well-being. Our findings, across both the qualitative and quantitative analyses, demonstrate how important it is for employers to respond to their employees after a natural disaster because it can affect their perceptions and views of the company. Because employees are such an important stakeholder in any company, employers and managers should think about what they can do to go above and beyond their normal duties and responsibilities to their employees in order to accommodate them after being impacted by a natural disaster.

While this study focused on organizational trust and identification, employers should also keep in mind how their actions can affect their employees' attitudes beyond trust and identification. Short-term actions in the wake of a natural disaster or other tragic events may have longer-term impacts on other important employee outcomes. For instance, employers likely also should think about attitudes such as commitment and job satisfaction as well as behaviors such as creativity, organizational citizenship, and turnover (Wang et al., 2020). These issues are illustrated in rich detail in the responses to the qualitative portion of the survey. Employee comments generally suggest that when post-natural disaster support is absent, employees' perceptions of their employer's CSR can be negatively impacted. Failing to provide help, support, resources, or accommodations can lead to employees feeling "discouraged, underappreciated, and demoralized," as one respondent described. This in turn, has a negative impact on employees' trust and

identification with their company and most likely a negative impact on other employee attitudes and behaviors mentioned in Wang et al. (2020) that were not examined in this study. By contrast, when employers do provide this kind of support after a natural disaster, it can lead to employees feeling thankful, appreciative, respectful, and proud towards their employer, as indicated by other respondents.

Because this study is based on employee perceptions of their employer's CSR after a hurricane, these findings can be beneficial to companies located in coastal areas in which such natural disasters more frequently occur. However, we suspect that these findings would generalize to other types of natural disaster (e.g., earthquakes, wildfires, flooding) in any location that experiences such events. Geographically dispersed companies with employees living in such vulnerable areas may also need to be sensitive to these issues during such disasters.

Limitations and Future Directions

As with any research study, several limitations should be addressed. One limitation of this study is that it was conducted in one location at one time with a limited set of observations. To replicate these findings and determine whether they are generalizable to a broader range of employees, future research on this topic should be conducted in different locations as well as after different types of natural disasters such as floods, wildfires, tornados, and earthquakes occur.

Another limitation is that this study is cross-sectional. A longitudinal design would help researchers understand how robust these findings are across time. Future researchers should aim to use longitudinal designs; for example, they could gather observations 2 weeks after the natural disaster, then 2 months after, and again 6 months after. Again, this would add to the robustness of these findings and see which attitudes are most likely to be impacted by CSR activities over time. Better still, researchers might collect baseline data on employee CSR perceptions before a disaster and collect this data again after the disaster to examine how the disaster – and subsequent corporate response – affected employee perceptions. This would be better than asking respondents to reflect on these changes as the current study does.

There are also some limitations to the size and representativeness of the sample. We acknowledge these limitations. However, due to some of the circumstances of the data collection, we view this as an opportunistic sample that can provide some initial important insights into this phenomenon. That said, future research should include larger, more diverse samples more fully representative of the working population in such situations. This would help to improve our confidence in the replicability and generalizability of these findings.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationships between employees' perceptions of their companies' CSR activities after a major natural disaster and the effects of these activities on employees' trust and identification with their organization. Responding to a natural disaster, such as a major hurricane, presents challenges and potential threats to organizational leadership. Based on the results of this study, engaging in CSR activities directed toward employees and the affected community can positively influence employee perceptions of the organization. Employers should be aware, however, that failing to take care of employees can harm employees' perception of their organization, and leaders should keep employees' needs in mind when making decisions about CSR activities in a post-disaster context.

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