Reviewer's report

Title: Perceived coping & concern predict terrorism preparedness in Australia

Version: 1 Date: 21 June 2012

Reviewer: Nicole A Errett

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Major Compulsory Revisions

1. This manuscript appears to apply a version of an important and validated behavioral model, the Extended Parallel Process Model (EPPM), introduced by Kim Witte in 1992 but makes no mention of this model or previous applications of it in preparedness research (e.g., Barnett, et al. and Balicer, et al). Although the study was not formulated with this model in mind, the results as presented are consistent with the model (perception of threat and perception of efficacy [coping] important predictors of behavior change). This important body of research would strongly enhance the discussion section of the manuscript, in terms of provision of other instances and fields in which these perceptions have had success in leading to behavior change. Moreover, these results support the importance of these factors and this model in changing behaviors in terms of preparedness, which is a relatively nascent field. In particular, the discussion section notes that perceived self efficacy (coping) may be a more important predictor of preparedness behavior change compared to perceived threat (concern), which has been reported elsewhere related to other preparedness actions/behaviors.

The last paragraph of the background section notes, “no study to date has examined these factors as predictors of such response.” Barnett et al. and Balicer et al. do simultaneously consider these factors in association with local health department, hospital and EMS workers preparedness behaviors and willingness to respond to disaster situations. Additionally, this statement is contradicted by the authors on page 6 under Predictor variables, Terrorism concern and coping perceptions, when the authors note (without any references to support it) “with recent evidence suggesting that this factor combination would be the most consistent predictor of preparedness behaviors.” The statements should be accurate and consistent, and appropriate literature should be referenced.

The manuscript introduces behavioral models (not EPPM) and the consistency of the findings’ with these models in the discussion section. Since it seems that the survey questions and study design did not take a model into account at the onset, these are appropriately presented here. However, the authors should take into consideration the broad readership of this journal, along with the authors’ target audience, when including these references. It is unlikely that preparedness experts would be familiar with these behavioral models, and as such, they should at least be explained/contextualized.
Minor Essential Revisions

1. Labels on figures are missing.

2. Figures present the same data as tables, thus creating redundancy. It is always helpful to produce a visual aide, but could the numerical unadjusted ORs related to the concern/coping with terrorism (as presented in the tables) somehow be incorporated into the figures so that they are all in one place? Then the concern/coping with terrorism section could be eliminated from the tables all together. Please also see comment 1 in “Discretionary Revisions.”

3. The limitations section misses some critical limitations inherent in survey research, particularly telephone research. Such examples include validation in other languages and response bias secondary to phone access (i.e., what is the percentage of persons without phones in Australia that would be systematically missed by only administering by phone). The methods section also notes that “While the final question set is not a comprehensive list of all the possible behaviors...” but this would be more appropriately placed in the limitations section.

4. What is the difference between neutral (3 on Likert scale), don’t know, not applicable and refused to the survey respondent? Explanation of how/why these multiple responses were utilized and why would be helpful to the reader. Moreover, the tables sometimes appear to combine don’t know and not applicable and sometimes do not. Why is this technique not consistent (or, was it an error in the table)?

Discretionary Revisions

1. What is the authors’ intention for including both adjusted odds ratios and unadjusted odds ratios? The methods section introduces the statistical decision to utilize a stepwise introduction and elimination of variables so I appreciate where these numbers came from, but the tables, as currently presented, are a bit busy. I wonder if both are necessary for comprehension of the take away points of the paper. This comment relates to comment 2 in the Minor Essential Revisions, in two ways: 1) If concern/coping with terrorism is removed from the tables, the tables may become more manageable, and 2) If a decision is made to remove unadjusted ORs from the tables, the unadjusted ORs would not need to be added to the figures (to ensure consistency) and the figures could be published as is. Moreover, there are several results that are not statistically significant. There is obvious value to reporting these, both to avoid publication bias and as some have practical significance. However, is there a way to highlight significant results in the tables/figures such that the reader’s eye can be directed to these critical findings?

2. Reference 31 presented in the Discussion Section is the U.S.’s See Something, Say Something Campaign. Is there a more appropriate reference that acknowledges Australia’s adoption of this campaign?
3. It is clear that these findings have the potential to influence preparedness campaigns. While the discussion alludes to areas for further research, it would be helpful to highlight implications for practice now.

4. There are some sentences that are unnecessarily difficult to read. For example, page 6, “Evacuation intentions in this context are reported at relatively high rates…” page 14, “It is possible that the greater effective size for vigilance…” and the first sentence of the Abstract’s background section, “Following major…” Hopefully the authors can revisit the verbiage used throughout in their next revisit/edits to improve readability.

5. Have the authors considered distinguishing named predictors (e.g. higher perceived coping) and behavioral responses (e.g. learning evacuation plans) from the rest of the text throughout through the use of italics, bold, or underlining? This may improve the flow of the reading, since the naming schema can seem somewhat awkward within the paper.

6. Why was ethnicity selected as a keyword?

7. AOR and CI acronyms are never defined in the abstract. AOR is first defined on page 10 of the manuscript, just prior to the preparedness results being presented, but is used before then. It is unclear if CI is ever defined. These should be defined in both the abstract and main body of the manuscript, at their first use.

8. CIs are used in the abstract, but p values in the results section. A consistent choice of statistical significance notation in the written manuscript would improve standardization.

9. Household income is reported, but what is its significance without knowledge of number of persons within households (i.e., a household with $80,000 income and five members has a very different implication than a household with $80,000 and one member)? Is household income reported in USD or Australian currency? This is unclear and should be noted given international readership.

10. This study aptly incorporates urban and rural distinction. Since both threats and preparedness campaigns are different in these different areas, expansion of the discussion of these results could make this a more important contribution to the literature.

11. The first two paragraphs of the discussion section appear to frame the paper, as opposed to contextualize the results. As such, these paragraphs would be more aptly placed in the introduction section. If left in the discussion section, it is recommended that they be revised such that they support the results, rather than frame them.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.