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IDENTIFYING WORK-RELATED FACTORS LEADING TO JOB BURNOUT:
A REVIEW OF E-COMMERCE BACK OFFICE CALL CENTER EMPLOYEES

by

Jeffrey V. Vizuela

Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of

Olivet Nazarene University

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of

Doctor of Education

in

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May 2014

IDENTIFYING WORK-RELATED FACTORS LEADING TO JOB BURNOUT:
A REVIEW OF E-COMMERCE BACK OFFICE CALL CENTER EMPLOYEES

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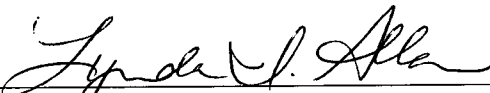
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Dissertation



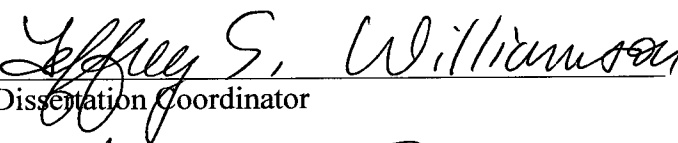
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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my whole family, but I would like to acknowledge my mom, Maria De Lourdes Villacreses Echeverria, and my grandma Olga Azucena Echeverria Cadena. Both of them have shown me, from heaven, the right direction and my purpose in life. I also dedicate this work to my wife, Haydee L. Merchancano, for her dedication to my studies and welfare and for always being there for me, and to my children, Jeffrey Ali Vizueta and Ashley Haydee Vizueta. This work is a testament to the fact that when you have a goal in mind, with hard work, commitment, and dedication, everything in this world is possible.

ABSTRACT

Call centers have become a vital part of global businesses. Companies in various industries have call centers that employ millions of agents to serve as the primary customer-facing channel. The purpose of this study is to identify the factors leading to employee job burnout in a telecommunications company in order to determine ways to retain valuable employees and to assist them in developing a better work–life balance. Several survey instruments were utilized to evaluate employees in an e-commerce back-office call center in the United States. Data analysis provided some expected results in terms of measuring burnout. It also provided some unexpected results regarding the main factors contributing to burnout and an employee’s subsequent intention to leave the business. Among the expected results were that a high number of employees (45.1%, $n = 41$) were deemed to have medium to high levels of emotional exhaustion. In addition, exhaustion and cynicism were found to be positively correlated with turnover intentions. The unexpected results were the discovery of connections between role stressors (role conflict and role ambiguity) and job burnout. In addition, control, fairness and values (AWS subscales) were found to be the best predictors of burnout when evaluated against emotional exhaustion.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Askin, Armony, and Mehrotra (2007) explained that call centers are an important part of business worldwide. Call centers are growing, employing millions of agents to serve as the primary customer-facing channel for companies in various industries. Call centers have become a fertile area for operations management research in various domains, such as in forecasting and planning. Because of advancements in telecommunications and information technology, operational challenges are increasing and becoming an important topic of research.

According to the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (n.d.) customer service representatives (CSR) held 2.3 million jobs in 2008 in the United States. In addition, “employment is projected to grow faster than average, and job prospects should be good” (p. 1).

The United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (n.d.) estimated that employment for CSRs was expected to grow about 18% from 2008 to 2018. Companies are concerned about customers’ experiences and are investing more capital in building meaningful and productive relationships with their customers. These relationship-building activities are creating more demand for CSRs. The estimated number of new jobs that will be created by 2018 is about 400,000.

Wegge, van Dick, Fisher, West, and Dawson (2006) declared that CSRs are expected to interface with customers via integrated telephone and computer solutions.

This communication process serves various purposes, e.g., order processing, consumer research, advertising, and sales.

Previous studies have documented several job stressors found in employees working as CSRs. Delp, Wallace, Geiger-Brown, and Muntaner (2010) explained that verbal abuse from consumers, unpaid overtime hours, and caring for more than one consumer at a time create decreased employee satisfaction. Masheh and Kasturi (as cited in Ashill, Rod, Thirkell, & Carruthers, 2008, p. 338) described how call center employees “routinely engage in highly demanding scripted interactions with customers that are continuously assessed and monitored by management”. Ashill et al. further explained that call center employees “experience role stress as a result of the conflicting demands of the organization, supervisor, and customers” (p. 338).

Statement of the Problem

The volume of daily work and the number of customer interactions overwhelms back office call center employees. The call center’s leadership team members want to help their employees have an effective work–life balance and decrease employees’ job burnout. Therefore, the call center’s leadership team plans to implement development programs to remove or mitigate anxiety and emotional exhaustion leading to job burnout. Maslach and Jackson (1981) defined burnout as “a syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among individuals who do ‘people work’ of some kind” (p. 99).

The purpose of this research was to identify the factors leading to employee job burnout in a telecommunication company in order to determine ways to retain valuable employees and assist them in developing a better work–life balance. Cordes and

Dougherty (1993) examined the literature pertaining to burnout and the determinants of interrelationships among the three burnout components, as determined by Maslach and Jackson (1981): “emotional exhaustion,” “depersonalization,” and “personal accomplishments” (p. 100). Cordes and Dougherty determined that burnout can be measured in a reliable and valid fashion by using the Maslach Burnout Inventory Survey (MBI) instrument. Maslach and Jackson constructed the MBI survey by incorporating the three aforementioned burnout components. The MBI survey measures the degree of association between burnout and its antecedents or consequences.

The current study sought to find the correlations among the multiple factors leading to job burnout. By researching the factors that contribute to job burnout of employees in the telecommunication industry, this study attempted to demonstrate that neglecting to invest in job development and other internal programs that support work–life balance activities would lead to increased anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and culminate in job burnout.

Background

Empirical studies on burnout conducted between the late 1970s and early 1980s by Maslach and Jackson (1981) provided a conceptualized model of job burnout. During this period, Maslach (1981) created the MBI. The MBI measures the effects of emotional exhaustion and a reduced sense of personal accomplishment.

Leiter and Maslach (1999) created the Areas of Worklife Survey (AWS), which describes the six areas of the work environment that are most relevant to relationship development at the workplace. The six areas, workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values, identify whether there are any mismatches between people and their

work environments. Mismatches can reduce capacity for involvement, energy and effectiveness. On the other hand, matches can improve work engagement.

Lee and Ashforth (1996) conducted a meta-analysis examining how demand, resources, and behaviors were related to the three dimensions of job burnout. A major conclusion of their meta-analysis was that emotional exhaustion was strongly related to turnover intentions. Emotional exhaustion was also explored by Deery, Iverson, and Walsh (2002), who described how work conditions and interpersonal interactions with customers can lead to emotional exhaustion and employee withdrawal from the organization.

Deery et al. (2002) determined “both the content and the context of the work were important sources of job stress and consequently appropriate sites for policy making” (p. 492). Deery et al. confirmed several theories regarding employees’ behaviors in call centers, where employees are expected to “appear happy, nice, and glad to serve the customer in spite of any private misgivings or any different feelings they may have” (p. 472). These findings confirmed that a number of job and work-setting variables affected the level of emotional exhaustion of employees.

Moore (2000) examined the role that work exhaustion plays in the turnover of technology professionals. Moore created a structured equation model utilizing variables such as work overload, role ambiguity and conflict, lack of autonomy, and lack of rewards. The results from this study showed that exhausted employees report significantly higher intentions to leave their jobs.

Holmvall and Sidhu (2007) examined how customer injustice, employee job satisfaction, and turnover intentions are related. They studied employees who expressed

stronger perceptions about the importance of having meaningful relationships with customers compared to other perceptions. Overall, Holmvall and Sidhu concluded that lower job satisfaction was associated with greater injustice but not with turnover intentions.

Jex and Elacqua (1999) reviewed the relationships among stressors, such as role conflict, work-family conflict, and time management behaviors. The authors found that engaging in time management behaviors might have a positive effect on the mental health of employees.

Staufenbiel and Konig (2010) reviewed how job insecurity influences performance, turnover intention, and absenteeism. The authors hypothesized that the effects of job security perceptions are neither purely negative nor purely positive. The authors created an integrated model capturing how job insecurity can be perceived as a job stressor, blurring the line between what employees hope for and what employers offer, leading to a reduction in job performance.

Staufenbiel and Konig (2010) suggested that if a stressor such as job insecurity can have both challenge and hindrance aspects, then other stressors might have similar aspects. One of the most interesting discoveries found was that challenge and hindrance are not mutually exclusive concepts. In other words, people having a perception of control over their own behaviors may focus on the challenge aspects of a stressor, while people with an external locus of control may perceive the hindrance aspects of a stressor.

Greenglass, Burke, and Konarski (1998) examined gender-related differences contributing to burnout, as measured by the MBI. Their research measured the gender-related differences in the ways social support and coping contribute to burnout. They

collected data in two waves separated by one year, using questionnaires sent via e-mail and reviewed key variables including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment.

Henderson (2010) examined the results of a 2010 salary and satisfaction survey, in which respondents were asked how their workload changed in the past three to five years. Henderson reported that increased workloads and responsibilities influenced job satisfaction. About 40% of the employees surveyed were considering a job change, while about 51% were leaving for professional advancement.

Shultz, Wang, and Olson (2010) focused on role overload and underload, both of which may be differentially associated with job-related stress and health outcomes. What is unique about their research is that Shultz et al. expanded on the common role overload implications played in relation to stress by studying the effects of underload, or too few job demands. Their results showed that employees with role overload had the highest level of adverse health outcomes, while employees with role underload had the second highest level.

London (1993) examined relationships between empowerment, career motivation, and support from supervisors for career development. London provided some evidence that subordinates' perceptions about empowerment and support are associated with the supervisor's views of the subordinates' career motivations.

Mukherjee and Malhotra (2006) examined the key antecedents of role clarity in call centers. They examined the effects of role clarity and its antecedents, and consequences on employee-perceived service quality. Mukherjee and Malhotra utilized a conceptual model, based on the job characteristics model and cognitive theories. They

revealed how role clarity plays is an important factor in explaining employee perceptions of service quality. Mukherjee and Malhotra indicated that job satisfaction and organizational commitment are influenced by feedback, participation, and team support.

Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to identify the factors leading to employee job burnout in a telecommunication company in order to determine ways to retain valuable employees and assist them in developing a better work–life balance. In this study, the researcher investigated the following research questions and their corresponding hypotheses:

1. What are the relationships between the areas of work environment and job burnout in call centers?

H₁: Direct relationships exist between the areas of work–life environment and job burnout.

2. What factors, alone or in combination, are the best predictors of job burnout?

H₂: The best job burnout predictors are workload, control, and reward.

3. What are the relationships between burnout and staff turnover?

H₃: A direct relationship exists between job burnout and turnover.

Description of Terms

Back office. The part of a company that does not deal directly with customers (Back office, n.d.).

Burnout. A syndrome of emotional exhaustion and cynicism occurring frequently among individuals who do *people work* of some kind (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Call center. An office or business where employees provide phone support for the customers of one or more companies or sell or advertise the companies' goods or services (Call centre, n.d.).

Career development. The process of learning and improving skills so you can do your job better and progress to better jobs (Career development, n.d.).

Customer service representatives (CSR). CSRs provide valuable links between customers and the companies who produce the products customers buy and the services they use. CSRs are responsible for responding to customer inquiries and resolving customer problems (United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (n.d.).

Depersonalization. An unfeeling and impersonal response toward recipients of one's care or service (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Emotional exhaustion. Feelings of being emotionally overextended and exhausted by one's work (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). The MBI was designed to measure the hypothesized aspect of burnout. Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishments are the components of this structure (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Personal accomplishments. Feelings of competence and achievement in one's work with people (Maslach & Jackson, 1981).

Telecom company. An organization providing voice or data transmission services, such as AT&T, Verizon, and Qwest. Manufacturers of networking hardware and software are also sometimes called telecom companies but are more likely to refer to themselves as data networking or networking companies (Telecom Company, n.d.).

Work-life balance. The amount of time you spend doing your job compared to the amount of time you spend with your family and doing things you enjoy (Work-life Balance, n.d.).

Significance of the Study

Several researchers have reviewed burnout in call centers (Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Rose & Wright, 2005). A few resources review role stressors (Ashill et al. 2008) and turnover intentions (Holmval & Sidhu, 2007). However, little research pertains to identifying work-related factors leading to job burnout and turnover in back office call centers within the United States.

Through the current study, the researcher will add to existing job burnout research in the telecommunication industry by utilizing several surveys in order to determine which work-related factors, such as role stressors, work areas, and support for career development, have a direct relationship to burnout and turnover in the back office call centers within the telecommunication industry.

The researcher created a model to understand several work-related issues influencing turnover and burnout and their relationships, to identify the critical areas of a back office that impact CSR turnover.

Process to Accomplish

The target population available for this research was one vendor with approximately 150 agents. The vendor provides order-writing services and handles e-commerce residential customers' incoming calls. The vendor has its main call center in the Northeast area of the United States and additional centers overseas in India and Philippines.

The researcher sent 150 surveys electronically, in order to cover the entire population. The researcher received 91 responses, which is a 60.6% response rate. The participants were back office call center agents who receive inbound calls and process order requests from online customers. These customers were from the telecommunications industry. Participation was on a strictly volunteer basis, and the participants worked in a non-union environment. A control group was not utilized because the current study was not looking to implement or test solutions to retain valuable employees.

Variables and Surveys

The researcher collected demographics data using the following variables:

Demographics

- Gender - discrete variable
- Race/ethnicity - discrete variable
- Age - continuous variable
- Education Level - discrete variable
- Marital Status - discrete variable

The researcher collected data using the following surveys:

Areas of Worklife Survey - AWS. Leiter and Maslach (1999) created a survey that utilizes a 5-point Likert scale from one to five indicating the extent to which the respondent agrees with the statements presented in the survey. Leiter and Maslach reported the following Cronbach's alpha ratings: Workload = 0.66, Control = 0.82, Reward = 0.78, Community = 0.80, Fairness = 0.79, and Values = 0.72. These results

provide evidence of good internal consistency. This survey contains the following subscales:

- Workload - Five questions
- Control - Four questions
- Reward - Four questions
- Community - Five questions
- Fairness - Six questions
- Values - Four questions

AWS Sample Questions

- I do not have time to do the work that must be done
- I have control over how I do my work

Maslach Burnout Inventory Survey - MBI. Maslach and Jackson (1981) created a survey that utilizes a 6-point Likert scale according to the frequency with which stressors are perceived. Maslach and Jackson reported Cronbach's alpha ratings of 0.90 for exhaustion, 0.76 Cynicism, and 0.76 for Personal Efficacy. These results provide evidence of good internal consistency. This survey contains the following subscales:

- Exhaustion - Five questions
- Cynicism - Five questions
- Professional Efficacy - Six questions

MBI Sample Questions

- I feel emotionally drained from my work
- I feel burned out from my work

Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict Survey. Ashill et al. (2008) utilized a survey that uses a Likert scale from one to five indicating the extent to which the respondent agrees with the statements presented in the survey. Ashill et al. reported Cronbach's alpha ratings of 0.84 for role ambiguity and 0.74 for role conflict. These results provide evidence of good internal consistency. There are two subscales:

- Role Ambiguity - Six questions
- Role Conflict - Five questions

Role Ambiguity Sample Questions

- I feel certain about how much authority I have
- I have clear, planned objectives for my job

Role Conflict Sample Questions

- I have to do things that should be done differently
- I work on unnecessary things

Support for Career Development Survey. London (1993) created a survey that utilizes a Likert scale from one to five indicating the extent to which the respondent agrees with the statements presented in the survey. Ito and Brotheridge (2005) reported an overall Cronbach's alpha rating of 0.84 using this survey. These results provide evidence of good internal consistency. There is one subscale, Career Development, with eight questions.

Turnover Intentions Survey. Griffeth and Hom (2001) created a survey that utilizes a Likert scale from one to five indicating the extent to which the respondent agree with the statements presented in the survey.

- Turnover Intentions - Three questions

Turnover Sample Question: Are you willing to accept changes in your current job?

The researcher utilized a combination of several existing measures available in the market to evaluate employees' perceptions of work settings' traits that determined whether they experience work engagement or burnout (Figure 1). The MBI Inventory Survey (Maslach & Jackson, 1981) and the AWS Survey were utilized (Leiter & Maslach, 1999) along with the Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict Survey (Ashill et al. 2008), the Support for Career Development Survey (London, 1993), and the Turnover Intentions Survey (Griffeth & Hom, 2001).

The data were collected using the following measurement scales:

- Nominal scale: Gender, race/ethnicity, education level, and marital status
- Interval scale: MBI, WSC, role ambiguity and role conflict, support for career development, and turnover intentions surveys
- Ratio scale: Age

The researcher performed data collection via electronic surveys. The researcher utilized a web survey tool to combine all the surveys and send the questionnaires electronically. The tool was utilized to deliver the surveys to all agents via e-mail. The agents received a link to the survey tool in the e-mail message. Agents answered the questions and submitted their responses anonymously. The researcher utilized the electronic e-mail addresses to deliver the surveys in order to link the pre-measures and post-measures for the current study. The call center leadership allocated offline time to internal agents to complete these surveys during non-busy conditions.

The researcher performed the data analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. The researcher examined demographic variables like age, education level, gender, marital status and race/ethnicity to identify differences among variables and groups. The researcher analyzed the possible correlations among the key job stressor variables, job satisfaction, and intentions-to-leave perceptions from the participants.

To answer the first study question: What are the relationships between the areas of work environment and job burnout in call centers? the researcher obtained data from both the MBI Survey and the AWS Survey. Pearson Product Moment correlations were performed from all the subscales in order to examine relationships between subscales from the AWS survey and the MBI survey.

The AWS survey contains the following subscales: control, workload, reward, community, fairness and values. The MBI survey contains the following subscales: exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy. Frequencies, means and standard deviations were performed for all the subscales.

To answer the second question: What factors, alone or in combination are the best predictors of job burnout? the researcher obtained data from the AWS Survey, Career Development Survey and the Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict Survey. Multiple linear regressions were utilized for this question. For predicting burnout, data were loaded into multiple regressions to see what scales/subscales produced the best model.

To answer the third question: What are the relationships between job burnout and staff turnover? the researcher obtained data from the Turnover Intentions Survey and the MBI Survey. Pearson Product Moment correlations were performed from all the

subscales in order evaluate relationships between subscales from the Turnover Intentions Survey and the MBI survey. Figure 1 illustrates the burnout model where the different surveys have been implemented for the current study.

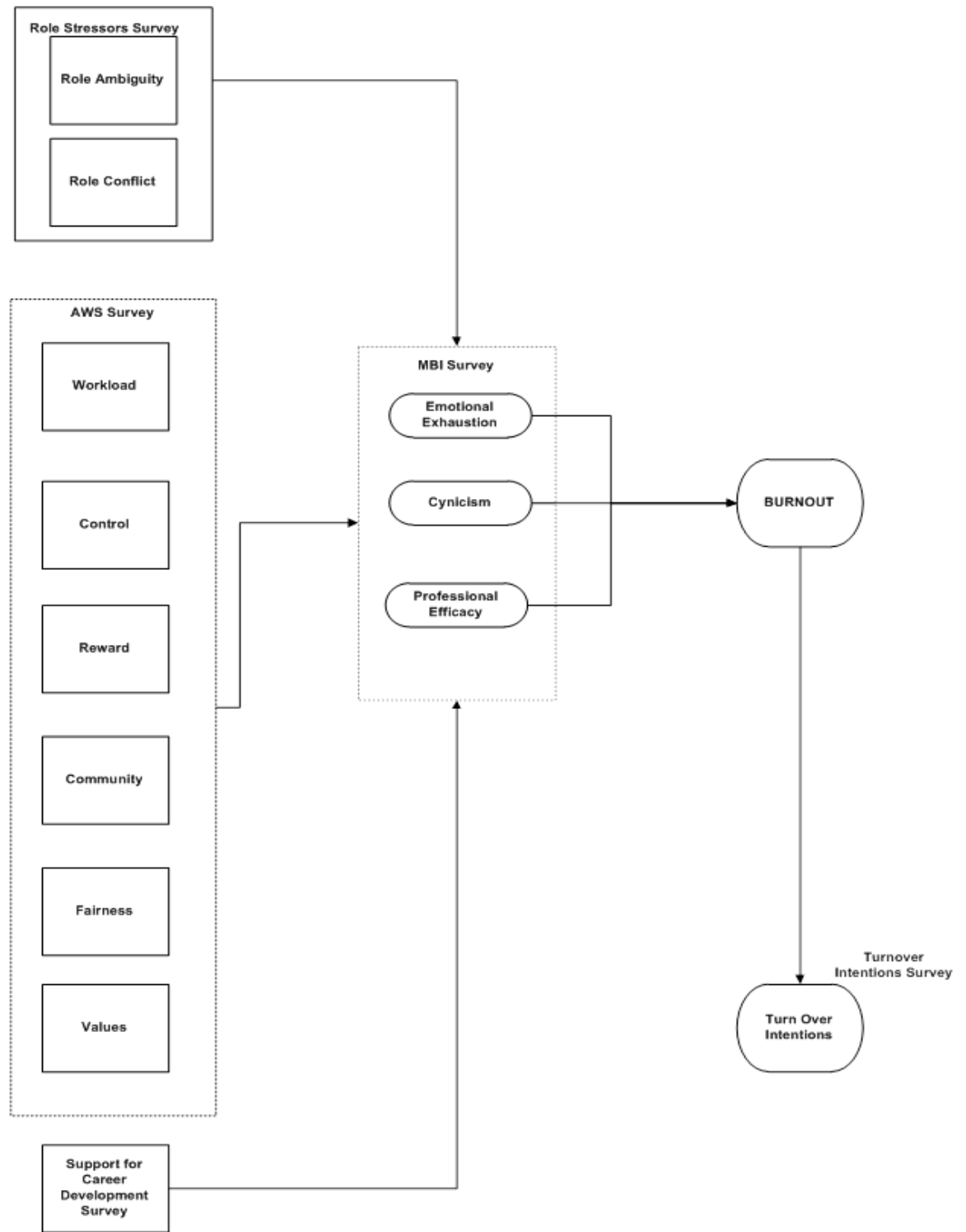


Figure 1. Burnout model showing the different surveys used in this research study order to determine burnout and turnover intentions.

The study was feasible, with some limitations. The researcher secured agreement from the telecom company to conduct this research, and had direct access to the participants. The researcher is an e-commerce business manager, supporting a third-party company providing call center resources. These CSRs place orders and handle incoming calls from his customers. The limitations of the current study included the participants' location (one Northeast state). The current study cannot make a generalization that its findings represents the overall burnout levels of all backoffice call center agents in the Telecom industry in the United States of America. This is because the respondents are limited only to customer service representatives dealing with e-commerce residential customers.

The electronic processes the researcher utilized during the data collection phase provided security and anonymity. There were minimal risks to participants during the current study. Some participants may have experienced discomfort during the survey process. Participants could perceive greater risk (e.g., possible repercussions) associated with completing organizational surveys, as opposed to a consumer survey. The researcher provided an electronic consent form to all participants explaining the perceived risks and benefits of the research study.

The researcher did not make the survey mandatory for the targeted population. The researcher conducted an exhaustive review of the literature about burnout and attrition so far where he has identified the possible antecedents leading to these undesirable outcomes in call centers. The researcher has in addition listed a high-level methodology approach to explain how data were collected and analyzed from the participants available for the current study. In the next chapter, the researcher will

provide a deeper review and analysis of the available literature about burnout and attrition.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter examines the literature related to burnout and turnover in the workplace. Definitions related to burnout, the areas of work environments, and turnover will be examined. A review of the literature related to burnout in different professions and settings will follow. The importance of career development support to avoid or mitigate burnout and turnover will be examined. The chapter will conclude with an analysis of the future of job burnout.

In the previous chapter, the researcher for the current study explained how call centers are now an essential part of business worldwide. Call centers are growing due to a renewed focus on retaining customers through better customer service. Call centers had become an attractive customer-facing channel for companies in different industries. According to the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics (n.d.) CSRs employment was projected to grow about 18% from 2008 to 2012. The estimated number of new jobs that will be created by 2018 is about 400,000.

Previous studies have documented different job stressors found in call centers. CSRs experienced role stress due to conflicting demands in their organizations. As noted in the previous chapter, according to Ashill et al. (2008), call center employees experienced role stress due to conflicting demands in their

organizations. These demands came from customers, supervisors and their own organizations. Delp et al. (2010) explained that verbal abuse from consumers, unpaid overtime hours, and caring for more than one consumer at a time produce less employee satisfaction.

The major findings from the previous chapter were related to the empirical studies on burnout conducted between the late 1970s and early 1980s by different researchers like Maslach and Jackson (1981), who created the job burnout model. The MBI survey was created during this period in order to assess the effects of emotional exhaustion. Leiter et al. (1999) created the AWS survey. The AWS survey described the six areas of the work environment that are most relevant to relationship development at the workplace. These areas are explained in detail later in this chapter. Another important finding for the current study came from the research conducted by Lee and Ashford (1996), who examined how demand, resources, and behaviors were related to the three dimensions of job burnout. A major conclusion of their meta-analysis was that emotional exhaustion was strongly related with turnover intentions. Critical to the current study was also the research conducted by Moore (2000) who examined the role that work exhaustion plays in the turnover of technology professionals. Moore's study showed that exhausted employees report significantly higher intentions to leave their jobs.

Schaufeli, Leiter, and Maslach (2009) estimated that there are about 6,000 dissertations, books, and journal articles published on burnout syndrome. The concept of burnout syndrome was first introduced to America via psychological literature some 40 years ago. Since then, it has been studied and researched in America and around the globe. Its discovery "has inspired researchers to study it and try to better understand what

it is and why it happens. It has inspired practitioners to figure out ways to cope with it, prevent it, or combat it” (p. 204). The common experience shared by so many people from so many professions made it both a popular and worthy concept to study. The burnout syndrome has stimulated further research in other areas, such as job stress and emotional labor. Schaufeli et al. (2009) described how the burnout syndrome is so widely accepted in some European countries such as Sweden and the Netherlands that it is considered a standard medical diagnosis. Information about burnout syndrome is found in medical books and health professionals are educated in how to assess and treat burnout. Globally, there has been an increase in the treatment of burnout. A range of professionals, including social workers, counselors, psychologists, and organizational consultants offer intervention services. These services are often preventive workshops to organizations but can also include individual treatment programs.

Definitions of Burnout

The dictionary defines burnout as “exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration” (“Burnout”, n.d.). Bradley (1969) was the first to introduce the term *staff burnout* in an article about probation officers managing juvenile delinquents. However, Freudenberger (1974) enhanced the concept of burnout by defining its physical and behavioral signs. Freudenberger identified the physical symptoms as consisting of “a feeling of exhaustion and fatigue, being unable to shake a lingering cold, suffering from frequent headaches and gastrointestinal disturbances, sleeplessness and shortness of breath” (p. 160). Discovering the behavioral signs was based upon empirical observations; Freudenberger

concluded that quickness to anger and instant irritation and frustration responses were the signs observed on staff members.

Freudenberger (1974) observed these behaviors in the free-clinic movement in the 1970s. Freudenberger (as cited in Schaufeli et al., 2009) experienced burnout syndrome himself twice, “which increased his credibility in spreading the message of burnout. His writings on the subject were strongly autobiographical” (p. 205). Freudenberger described additional behaviors he had observed, such as “the burn-out candidate finds it just too difficult to hold in feelings. He cries too easily, the slightest pressure makes him feel overburdened and he yells and screams” (p. 160).

Maslach (1976) contributed further to the concept of burnout. Maslach utilized interviews, questionnaire surveys, and observations in order to track burnout behaviors and to standardize what is known today as the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). Initially, Freudenberger (1974) and later Maslach agreed that burnout is present in employees dealing directly with customers or clients with problematic issues. The type and amount of these problematic issues seemed to overwhelm employees. Back in the 1970s, both authors theorized that these chronic strong feelings experienced by employees induced burnout. They also concluded that deterioration in the quality of service or care provided by employees would result. Maslach predicted that the tendency to leave one’s job was related to burnout. Maslach hypothesized that one of the outcomes of burnout is the impairment of employees’ relationships on and off the job. Maslach proposed that relationships with friends and family would be difficult due to burnout. Furthermore, Maslach suggested that the increased use of alcohol and an increase in insomnia were related to burnout. Another area in which Maslach and Freudenberger

agreed was in the length of employment before burnout starts manifesting itself. They both concluded that, within the first year of employment, burnout would start appearing in the workplace.

Pines and Maslach (1978) defined burnout as “a syndrome of physical and emotional exhaustion, involving the development of negative self-concept, negative job attitudes, and loss of concern and feelings for clients” (p. 233). Pines and Maslach described how working with clients over an extended time would result in personal stress. Some of the recommendations to reduce burnout and stress included reducing the patient-to-staff ratio, shortening work hours, allowing for more opportunities for breaks, sharing the patient load, changing the function of staff meetings, improving work relationships, holding retreats for staff members, taking precautions as an individual, and training students to handle future stresses.

Cordes and Dougherty (1993) examined the literature of burnout and concluded that the early burnout studies in the mid-1970s were lacking precise measurements of the burnout phenomenon. They concluded that systematic empirical studies on burnout were not conducted and published until the late 1970s and early 1980s. Cordes and Dougherty mentioned how the concept of burnout was clearly defined during those years from multiple research studies (e.g., Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Maslach and Jackson created the MBI instrument to measure burnout, and it was considered “an accepted, standardized, and psychometrically sound instrument” (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993, p. 623). Another research study mentioned was the one performed by Pines and Maslach (1978) where “quantitative overload refers to the individual’s perception that the work cannot be done in the allotted time” (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993, p. 631). In addition, the

study performed by Leiter and Maslach (1988) where the burnout dimensions were linked to lower levels of organizational commitment was discussed. The study performed by Maslach (1976) where it was found that role overload is present in employees that feel overload with cases and clients (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993, p. 631).

Maslach and Jackson (1981) mentioned three key aspects of burnout syndrome. The first aspect mentioned was an increased feeling of emotional exhaustion by employees. Employees feel that as their emotional resources are drained, they are no longer able to cope with issues on a psychological level. The second aspect was the discovery of negative and cynical attitudes developed towards clients. Maslach and Jackson concluded that the negative reactions to a client could be linked to the experience of emotional exhaustion. The third aspect was “the tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, particularly with regard to one’s work with clients” (p. 99). In other words, employees feel dissatisfied with their performance at work. After reviewing these three key aspects, Maslach and Jackson concluded that the consequences can be quite serious and detrimental to employees, their clients, and ultimately to the organization as a whole.

Construction of the MBI Instrument

The MBI instrument was the primary model used during this research to determine burnout and its different relationships to turnover in call centers. Three different MBI instruments have been created since 1981. Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1996) provided the following clarification about the different versions available to determine burnout:

- The original measure that was designed for professionals in the human

services (MBI-Human Services Survey, or MBI-HSS). The MBI-HSS items have not changed since the original form was published in 1981.

- An adaptation of the original measure for use with educators (MBI Educators Survey, or MBI-ES; formerly known as MBI-Form Ed). The MBI-ES items have not changed since the original form, copyright 1986.

- A new version of the MBI designed for use with workers in other Occupations (MBI-General Survey or MBI-GS).

Maslach and Jackson (1981) designed the MBI-HSS first to measure some aspects of burnout syndrome. This evaluation instrument was the answer to the lack of empirical studies to determine burnout. Maslach et al. (1996) explained how the MBI-HSS instrument has been translated to different languages and now is considered as the leading measurement of burnout. The early studies about burnout conducted by Maslach and Jackson prior to 1981 helped them to establish the components of the MBI-HSS instrument.

Prior to the development of the MBI-HSS instrument, Maslach et al. (1996) utilized interviews and questionnaires that were an essential source of tracking down feelings and outcomes from employees experiencing burnout. The MBI-HSS questions were developed following other established scales, such as the Hassles Scale (as cited in Lazarus & Cohen, 1977). The MBI-HSS questions were developed with the premise that the recipient provided service, care, or treatment to clients, customers, or patients. Each statement focused on intensity and frequency. The first dimension, frequency, is measured between one *a few times a year or less* and six *every day*. The second dimension, intensity, is measured between one *very mild, barely noticeable* and seven

major, very strong. Maslach et al. explained that the MBI-HSS was designed to measure “three aspects of the burnout syndrome: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment” (p. 4).

The researcher for the current study selected the MBI-General Survey, or MBI-GS, to measure burnout. Maslach et al. (1996) explained how the MBI-HSS was originally created to start measuring some occupational issues as burnout for people providing human services. However, researchers utilized the MBI-HSS, modified or not, with a number of occupations not related to human service providers:

These researchers found that on the MBI-HSS subscales, not only did the scores of the groups they studied differ from norms established with human services providers, but the differentiation between the MBI-HSS’s three factors: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishments, was not maintained across these occupational groups. (Maslach et al., p. 19, 1996)

The MBI-GS was developed due to these findings. The MBI-HSS was adapted to other occupations that have occasional or no contact with people; the MBI-GS was developed to measure burnout when dealing with work, not with people at work. The MBI-GS measures the employee’s relationships with work from engagement to burnout. There is a statistically significant difference between these measurement models:

Burnout as measured by the MBI-GS is thought to share many features with that measure by the MBI-HSS, with the major difference being that the MBI-GS does not focus primarily on the service relationship, but on the performance of the work in general. (p. 19)

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) described the three dimensions of the MBI-GS: exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy. The first dimension “measures fatigue without referring to other people as the source of one’s tiredness” (p. 294). The second dimension “reflects indifference or a distant attitude towards work in general, not necessarily with other people” (p. 294). The third dimension “encompasses both social and nonsocial aspects of occupational accomplishments” (p. 294). Schaufeli and Bakker considered high scores on two out of the three dimensions, exhaustion and cynicism, to be indicative of burnout. On the other hand, they considered low scores on professional efficacy to be indicative of burnout.

Definitions of Areas of Worklife Survey

Measuring burnout solely in terms of employees interacting with people at work was sufficient in the early days of burnout research, in the 1980s. Leiter and Maslach (1999) explained that the main themes in burnout research can be found in the six areas of worklife: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values. These six areas of work life ideally have a mutually agreeable balance. However, mismatches can occur when there are critical issues unresolved in the workplace or when the working relationships change to unacceptable levels. The six areas of work life were later compiled into a model called the AWS survey. This measurement instrument identifies the six areas of work life and the mismatches within these areas.

Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) explained how a model to determine the individual experiences in relationship with employees’ work environments was needed, in addition to the MBI instrument. This new model was named the AWS. It contained six work environment domains: workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values.

Maslach et al. explained how “burnout arises from chronic mismatches between people and their work settings in terms of some or all of these six areas” (p. 414). These six areas are interrelated, but each one helps researchers find unique relationships with employees and their work settings. These domains finally come together to form a framework to determine the antecedents to burnout.

Leiter and Maslach (2004) explained that the AWS comprises “29 items that offer different scores for each of the six areas of worklife: workload (6), control (3), reward (4), community (5), fairness (6), and values (5)” (p. 102). The survey’s participants had the option to indicate their agreement with questions on a five-point Likert scale. The Likert scale went from one *strongly disagree* to five *strongly agree*. In each of the areas, the recipient’s survey can be a match with a high score (greater than 3.00) or a low score (less than 3.00). According to the AWS, the higher the score, the higher the congruence between the recipient’s score and the workplace. However, the lower the score, the more incongruence between the recipient’s score and the workplace.

Spence and Grau (2011) conducted a cross-sectional study among nurses to test the AWS model during the nurses’ first year of practice. They concluded that:

Nurses with higher levels of psychological capital (a personal resource), experienced a better fit between their expectations of and the actual reality of their conditions, which was related to decreased experiences of bullying, burnout and physical and mental health problems. (p. 283)

Further, Spence and Grau (2011) made a recommendation to add personal resources to the AWS model. In addition, Spence and Grau suggested the importance of fostering support environments and creating conflict-free work settings to be able to

recruit and retain nursing professionals. See Appendix A for this information:

Descriptions of the Six Areas of Worklife Survey Scales

Definitions of Turnover and Turnover Intentions

The dictionary defines turnover as “the rate at which employees leave a company and are replaced by new people” (“Turnover”, n.d.). Ito and Brotheridge (2005) defined voluntary turnover intentions as “an employee’s intention to leave an organization, expressed in such terms as making plans to search for a new job” and said it “reflects the potential for voluntary turnover” (p. 7). Turnover intention is a measure utilized to determine whether employees are planning to leave the business voluntarily or involuntarily. Lee and Ashforth (1996) conducted a meta-analysis in which they determined that two of the burnout dimensions (emotional exhaustion and depersonalization) were strongly related to turnover intentions.

Leiter and Maslach (2009) found that the burnout model and its relationships with individual domains from the AWS model predicted nurses’ turnover intentions. From the burnout model, they discovered that cynicism was the primary burnout predictor for turnover. Value conflicts and inadequate rewards were the two most critical areas within the AWS model. They explained how “burnout was indeed predictive of turnover intention, and it clearly mediated the effect of workplace factors on this outcome” (p. 337) for nurses in this study. One key point about this study is that Leiter and Maslach discovered that the burnout scales “may have a differential effect for mediating different outcomes. In the case of turnover intentions, cynicism carried the most weight (even though it maintained its relationship with the other dimensions)” (p. 337). Cynicism and turnover intentions are strongly connected. Rewards distribution in the organization was a

significant work life area that was pointed out in this study as an important issue. Lack of rewards, such as recognition or compensation was another area that led nurses to a higher level of cynicism that in time influenced turnover decisions.

Moore (2000) examined how emotional exhaustion influences turnover in technology personnel. He concluded that the main contributors to turnover intentions “were perceived fairness of rewards, work exhaustion, organizational tenure, and perceived workload” (p. 158). He also provided some suggestions to reduce turnover intentions in the IT industry by implementing strategies “to reduce work exhaustion and enhance perceptions of reward fairness in order to retain IT professionals” (p. 158). A limitation was noted in this study related to the survey response (11%). Moore theorized about the possibility that due to the low response, “the sample may not be representative of the general population of technology professionals in the U.S.” (p. 159).

Allen, Shore, and Griffeth (2003) studied turnover and turnover intentions in two different samples: insurance agents of a large national insurance company and sales people in the beauty and cosmetics division of a large department store in the Southeastern United States. Allen et al. explained that turnover data were collected from each organization one year after the surveys were delivered. For insurance agents, the turnover rate was about 4%. For the sales people, it was higher at about 40%. Perceived organizational support (POS) and its relationship with turnover were also measured during this study, and “POS was significantly negatively correlated with turnover intentions in both samples and actual turnover in one sample, supporting the contention that individuals who perceive greater POS are less likely to withdraw” (p. 114). Another key finding was the negatively correlated relationships between human resources (HR)

practices and turnover. This study showed how HR practices are related to turnover intentions. Lastly, they concluded that POS “plays an important role in the turnover process as a mediator of more distal antecedents” (p. 114).

Castilla (2005) examined the relationships between productivity and turnover in a call center environment. Most interestingly, this was the first study in which productivity and turnover relationships were reviewed for call center employees who were referred to the business and for employees who were not referred to the business. Employee referral is normally an internal recruitment method utilized by companies to identify potential new employees. In this study, referred employees are those new employees who were referred by existent employees to their company. Castilla found that the performances of referred employees were higher compared to those of the non-referred employees. This author said, “Referrals show a better level of performance, as measured by a higher quality-adjusted average number of calls answered. Referrals answer, on average, an additional phone call per hour when compared to no referrals” (p. 1263). The study showed that neither good performers nor poor performers are likely to leave the business. Castilla concluded that, “the findings seem to suggest that the performance of the employee is not a good predictor of turnover in this research setting” (p. 1269).

Bakker, et al. (2003) conducted a multi-sample study regarding job demands, job resources, and their relationships with burnout. “The central hypothesis was that job demands would be the most important predictors of absenteeism, through their relationship with health problems” (p. 393). The results confirmed their hypothesized model. First, they concluded that burnout and engagement are negatively related. Second, burnout was predicted by lack of job resources and job demands. Engagement was found

to be “exclusively predicted by available resources” (p. 398). Third, “burnout is related to health problems as well as to turnover intentions, whereas engagement is related only to the latter” (p. 393). The fourth and final conclusion was that “burnout mediated the relationships between job demands and health problems, whereas engagement mediated the relationship between job resources and turnover intention” (p. 394).

Holmvall and Sidhu (2007) conducted a study to predict customer service employees’ job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Interactional justice and its relationships with lower job satisfaction and turnover intentions were reviewed. Holmvall and Sidhu defined interactional justice by saying that “people perceive interactional justice when others treat them with dignity and respect and refrain from inappropriate remarks or questions (termed interpersonal justice), and provide them with adequate and honest explanations for decision-making procedures and resulting decisions (termed informational justice)” (p. 480). As expected, Holmvall and Sidhu found that interactional injustice from customers has negative consequences. However, they did not find statistical significance in the overall association between injustice and turnover. Some of the recommendations to organizations that want to reduce low job satisfaction and eventually turnover are: to be aware of the negative consequences of customer injustice on employees; to provide training to employees on how to manage unfair customers; and to consider allowing employees to transfer irate customers to supervisors who have more experience handling difficult customer situations.

Ito and Brotheridge (2005) conducted a study to understand whether employee career adaptability leads to commitment, turnover, or both. They concluded that “career adaptability played a central role and, indeed, served as a two-edged sword” (p. 14). On

one hand, it increased employees' intentions to leave; on the other hand, it enhanced affective commitment. They concluded that a link with dependence was present in the study among the variables. Participation in decision-making, autonomy, and supervisory support of career were all found to be positively related to affective commitment. Interestingly, they found that supervisor support was associated with the employees' intentions to leave.

Burnout in Different Professions

Leiter and Maslach (1988) conducted a study among nurses and support staff in a small private hospital in California. The study measured the impact of interpersonal environment on burnout and engagement commitment. Communications among nurses and support staff were differentiated as coworker contact or supervisor contact. Both categories were further differentiated as pleasant or unpleasant contacts. Leiter and Maslach hypothesized that "role conflict and contacts with other employees influence the level of burnout, which in turn, influences the level of organizational commitment" (p. 299). They confirmed that emotional exhaustion was positively related to role conflict and unpleasant supervisor contact. Another finding was "depersonalization was related to pleasant coworker contact as expected, but not pleasant contact. It was positively correlated with unpleasant supervisor contact" (p. 302). Furthermore, the three MBI subscales were found to be related to each other, which is consistent with the burnout theory from Maslach and Jackson (1981).

Kalliath and Morris (2002) conducted a study among nurses in a general community hospital located in the midwestern United States. The purpose of the study was to measure the impact of differential levels of job satisfaction on burnout. Kalliath

and Morris were able to confirm that “job satisfaction is a significant predictor of burnout in nurses. The path coefficients obtained show that job satisfaction had both direct and indirect effects on burnout” (p. 652). Kalliath and Morris found that in a highly stressful work environment, like the one nurses experience, providing higher job satisfaction could reduce burnout levels. Emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were the main burnout predictors in this study. Finally, they recommended that in future studies, a model that can measure burnout from job satisfaction levels “can serve as an early indicator of potential problems. Preventive measures to address such problems may help in the retention of nurses” (p. 653).

Greenglass et al. (1998) conducted a study among teachers in a large Canadian city. This study was completed in two phases, or waves, one year apart. They measured the differences between gender-related differences and burnout in the organization. Burnout was measured in both waves by using the MBI instrument (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Results from Wave 1 variables “between men and women indicated that men had significantly higher scores than did women on depersonalization, bureaucratic interference, and years in present position. Women reported significantly higher co-worker support than did men” (p. 1092). An intriguing finding related to the number of years in present position was the lack of personal accomplishment: “The greater the number of years in present position, the greater the feelings of lack of personal accomplishment” (p. 1092). Finally, Greenglass et al. concluded that depersonalization was a response to emotional exhaustion. The consequences might be that teachers “may be distancing themselves from their students as a reaction to their feelings of being emotionally drained by the job” (p. 1101).

Jackson and Rothman (2005) conducted a study with educators in South Africa. They measured burnout with an adapted version of the MBI instrument, using the MBI-GS to determine differences between burnout and different demographic groups that spoke different languages. They found that cynicism and depersonalization separately did not characterize burnout. The findings suggested that both dimensions collapsed “into one mental distance construct, which along with exhaustion and professional efficacy constitutes the syndrome” (p. 106). They concluded that there are differences “between the levels of exhaustion, mental distance and professional efficacy experienced by educators in different types of schools” (p. 106). One of the major recommendations from this study to future research among educators is to omit items 13 *I just want to do my job and not be bothered* and 18 *I’ve become more callous toward people since I took this job*” from the regular MBI-GS. The reason given to omit item 13 was the ambivalent nature found in this question. For item 18, the word *callous* was found to be possibly associated with professional efficacy and not with exhaustion, cynicism, or depersonalization.

Tuuli and Karisalmi (1999) conducted a study among teachers and health care employees in Finland. They found that 66% of workers in health care occupations had encountered burnout often, followed by teachers with about 61%, and social workers with 55%. According to these authors, burnout was “quite a common phenomenon in Finland” (p. 441). These claims were further confirmed by Lehto (2004) in the Quality of Work Life Survey 2003, which:

Showed that the risk of grave work exhaustion or burnout is very common in Finnish working life and is a problem, which has escalated over time. For

instance, in 1997, 47% of employees at least occasionally experienced a risk of burnout, while this proportion rose to 50% in 2003. The risks of burnout are particularly recognizable in female-dominated occupational groups, such as healthcare, social services and teaching. (Lehto, 2004, p. 1)

Tuuli and Karisalmi (1999) concluded that the various conflicts in the workplace, such as job demands were positively related to burnout. These authors stated that job control was powerful in both business lines. However, it was a bit more powerful in retail than the metal industry. In addition, conflicts and psychological job demands were found to have the strongest relation to burnout.

Hawkins (2001) conducted a study with 452 police officers in four city police departments. This author measured burnout and the relationships among the three subscales: exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishments. Hawkins found “a strong correlation when emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were correlated individually with personal accomplishment” (p. 343). Emotional exhaustion was the measure on the scale on which more than one-third of the police officers scored high. In addition, more than half of the police officers scored high on depersonalization. Finally, low personal accomplishments were found in more than one-third of the officers evaluated. There was a racial component detected in the study in which “white officers seemed to be more prone to emotional exhaustion and to have higher depersonalization scores. This was more apparent after controlling for race via multiple regressions statistical techniques” (p. 358).

Zapf, Seifert, Schmutte, and Holz (2001) conducted a study in Germany with five samples of people working in children’s homes, kindergartens, hotels, banks, and call

centers. This study was “one of the first which systematically investigated organizational variables, social variables and emotion work as well as their combined effects on burnout” (p. 541). One of the largest correlations found was among emotion work, concentration necessities, and time pressure. The researchers concluded that “emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are primarily affected by stressors whereas personal accomplishments are primarily affected by resources” (p. 543). Depersonalization was also predicted by the absence of resources, such as positive emotions, and stressors, such as negative emotions.

Deery et al. (2002) conducted a study in five call centers in Australia. Call center work normally requires high levels of sustained energy to interact with customers. These frequent interactions in call centers can lead to burnout and employee withdrawal. Call center employees can handle inbound or outbound calls on activities like billing explanation, product and service information, customer complaints, and order-processing activities. Deery et al. explained that computer technology is a critical component of the call centers where employees are closely monitored. Employees are expected:

To follow a tightly scripted dialogue with customers and conform to highly detailed instructions. The close monitoring of words and manners and the limited variation that employees are often allowed in service interaction has meant that call centre workers have lost a large measure of control over their self-presentation to customers. (p. 473)

Deery et al. (2002) showed that some of the job and work-setting variables, such as customer interactions, scripted conversational rules, and workload “had a significant effect on the emotional exhaustion of employees” (p. 485). Emotional exhaustion was

also affected by team leader support, physical health, positive affectivity, and the demographic variable of job tenure. These authors concluded:

These results indicate that call centre employees in our study were significantly more likely to suffer from emotional exhaustion when they believed that customers had become more abusive and demanding, when they disliked speaking in a scripted manner and when they felt that management was both focusing on the quantity of calls taken, rather than the quality of service, and were unduly pressurizing the staff to minimize their wrap-up time. (p. 487)

Ashill et al. (2008) conducted a study among call center employees in New Zealand. They measured the relationships between role stressors and burnout. The data for this study were collected using an “online survey questionnaire on role stressors, emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, job resourcefulness and service recovery performance” (p. 338). These authors confirmed that job resourcefulness “buffers both the dysfunctional effects of role stressors on symptoms of burnout and the effects of role stressors on service recovery performance” (p. 338). The recommendation for future researchers was to include measurement models in which supervisors could provide objective feedback regarding employee performance. Another recommendation was to include other variables, such as training, rewards, and even service technology support. Finally, Ashill et al. suggested that future research should be able to find ways to clarify the role of reduced personal accomplishment in the burnout process. According to the authors, the only significant effect on job performance is personal accomplishment, and not emotional exhaustion or depersonalization.

Chiu and Tsai (2008) conducted a study among employees in the hotel and restaurant businesses in Taiwan. These authors measured the relationships among burnout, job involvement, and organization citizenship behavior (OCB). They explained that as “expected, results of this study demonstrated that emotional exhaustion had a negative relationship to OCB, which indicated that employees with a greater extent of emotional exhaustion are less willing to display OCB” (p. 526). Chiu and Tsai found a negative relationship between OCB and personal accomplishment. One explanation they offered was that employees no longer see personal accomplishment as a personal challenge, which leads to an unwillingness to display OCB or to work in this type of environment.

Career Development Support

Brown and Minor (1992) reviewed the 1989 National Career Development Association (NCDA) survey to determine public support for career development activities in America’s schools. One thousand and three hundred and fifty adults constituted the sample ($n = 1,350$). The Gallup Organization conducted the survey by phone. The survey consisted of several items measuring adult perceptions of school counselors’ activities conducted to improve students’ career development activities. Brown and Minor showed that 43% ($n = 580$) of the adults surveyed believed that not enough attention was given to career development activities. The career developing activities surveyed were:

- Helping students choose careers
- Helping students identify job openings in the community
- Helping non-college-bound students develop job skills

- Job placements; helping students learn to use occupational information
- Developing employability skills

Another area of interest from the survey was that African Americans “consistently indicated that more attention needs to be paid to career development activities” (p. 260). The demographic results in this area were African Americans 53% ($n = 164$), Asian-Pacific Islanders 47% ($n = 120$), Whites 42% ($n = 243$), and Hispanics 32% ($n = 86$). They also noticed a difference between two groups: those who had finished high school had attended college, or who were college graduates and those who had not finished high school. Forty-four percent to 51% of the first group indicated that not enough attention was paid to career development activities versus 31% of the second group. These results suggested that school counselors should give further attention to career development activities. The school counselors who do not “incorporate these activities into their program run the risk of losing public support for their programs” (p. 261).

London (1993) conducted research with employees and supervisors to measure relationships among empowerment, career motivation, and support from supervisors for career development. London created an instrument to measure:

Support for career development using a six-point scale ranging from 1 = low to 6 = high. The instrument asked employees to rate the extent to which their supervisor provides a useful performance appraisal, provides ongoing performance feedback, jointly sets performance goals with the subordinates, helps the subordinate develop career plans and allows adequate training time. (p. 58)

This survey was used in London’s study to explain how employees feel about career development support received from supervisors and whether this support led to job

satisfaction or burnout. There were two studies in this research. Study 1 results showed that employees who received higher levels of support from supervisors saw themselves as empowered and supported for their own career development. In Study 1, “self-ratings of empowerment and support for career development were positively and significantly related to supervisor ratings of career motivation, in Study 2 the relations were positive, but not significant” (p. 66).

Turner and Lapan (2002) conducted a study with middle-school adolescents to measure the support in school programs received from parents that assisted their students with tools to develop confidence for career planning and occupational exploration. They found that career self-efficacy and career planning predicted students’ career interests. The results were realistic (25%, $n = 22$), investigative (30%, $n = 27$), social interest (23%, $n = 21$), artistic interests (17%, $n = 15$), enterprising interests (19%, $n = 17$), and conventional interests (12%, $n = 11$). In contrast, the parent support results were: realistic (36%, $n = 32$), investigative (43%, $n = 39$), artistic (29%, $n = 26$), social (36%, $n = 32$), enterprising (36%, $n = 32$), and conventional (41%, $n = 37$). Participants’ perceptions by gender indicated that more boys than girls were employed in realistic and investigative careers. In addition, more girls than boys were perceived to be employed in social careers by middle-school adolescents.

Thornett, Cobb, Chambers, and Mohanna (2005) reviewed 11 primary care professions in England to determine whether such professionals were utilizing career support services available to them to achieve career development and progression. The sample size for this study was one thousand three hundred and fifty five professionals ($n = 1355$). According to these authors, “the response rate was low (27%, $n = 368$), but

suggested that only a minority (34%, $n = 124$) of respondents had accessed formal careers support in the last five years. The majority sought help from informal sources” (p. 66). The initial findings were later explored more fully by using four focus groups (Group 1, $n = 7$, Group 2, $n = 12$, Group 3, $n = 12$, Group 4, $n = 7$). The primary care professionals expressed struggles with accessing career advice and making career changes. Most importantly, the primary care professional felt their supervisors experienced a conflict of interest between two roles: supporting the organization and supporting the professional’s interest to advance or move. Thornett et al. suggested that primary care professionals “should be made more aware of the support available through improved publicity, use of the Internet and improved education for line managers so that they could direct professionals to appropriate services, possibly during the appraisal process” (p. 71).

Thompson (2010) conducted a study with assistant principals to measure whether these professionals had a close link between their professional development plans from school and their own career planning. Thompson showed that most of the assistant principals’ schools needed to improve in terms of succession planning and that some of the schools were on the right track. Most participants indicated that their professions had a close link between their professional development plan and their school’s strategic plan. However, only a minority of the participants observed linkages between their career plans and their professional development plans.

Conclusion

The main burnout phenomenon studies from the late 1960s to the present have been explained. Initially, authors like Bradley (1968), Freudemberger (1974), and Maslach (1976) started to discuss the burnout phenomenon from direct observation of

people working in the human services field. Some of the key findings that have informed the current study from both Freudenberger and Maslach include:

- Chronic strong feelings experienced by employees induced burnout
- Deterioration in the quality of service or care provided by employees to patients and customers. Unfriendly behavior and customer mistreatment behaviors were observed.
- Burnout would start appearing in the workplace within the first year of employment

Eventually, Maslach and Jackson (1981) created the first MBI-HSS survey, which was directed at participants working in the human service industry. The researcher for the current study utilized the latest version of the MBI survey, the MBI-GS, which was created by Maslach et al. (1996). The MBI-GS was developed to measure burnout when dealing with work, not with people at work. One of the studies that utilized the MBI-GS survey that yielded valuable results for this study is the one conducted by Schaufeli et al. (2004). Schaufeli et al. concluded that at least two of the three burnout dimensions scored high, indicating burnout. The dimensions were exhaustion and cynicism. This is an important finding because it confirms the recommendations from the MBI-GS manual, where Maslach et al. recommended that in order for a participant to be classified as burned out, the participant should score high on the same two dimensions found by Schaufeli et al. This information will be reviewed during the data analysis of the current study to verify whether the data collected match these findings or not.

Another study that utilized the MBI-GS was the one conducted by Jackson and Rothman (2005). They used the MBI-GS “to test the psychometric qualities of a new

three-factor model of burnout for educators that consisted of exhaustion, mental distance, (including depersonalization, an MBI-ES factor, and cynicism, an MBI-GS factor) and professional efficacy” (p. 106). They found that cynicism and depersonalization alone did not represent burnout but that these two characteristics actually collapsed into one mental construct. Jackson and Rothman merged two versions of the MBI surveys found in the literature. Jackson and Rothman wanted to test the psychometric qualities of the MBI model. This is not the intent of the current study. The current study utilized the MBI-GS survey to determine burnout among participants. The participants were classified into two levels of burnout: high or low. This classification was essential in order to determine the factors predicting burnout, along with determining the relationships between burnout and the areas of work environment, which helped to answer the three research questions.

As noted previously in this chapter, Leiter and Maslach (1999) created the AWS survey. Major findings by Leiter and Maslach (2009) were the relationships found between different AWS factors and burnout. Among nurses, they found that value conflicts and inadequate rewards were the most critical areas within the AWS model. Spence and Grau (2011) conducted another study that utilized the AWS model. Spence et al. concluded that nurses with higher levels of psychological capital experienced lower levels of burnout. Spence and Grau recommended the implementing support environments in order to recruit and retain valuable resources in the organization.

The final part of this research focused on burnout and turnover intentions relationships. As noted previously in this chapter, Lee and Ashforth (1996) conducted a study where they determined that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization were strongly related to turnover intentions. Leiter and Maslach (2009) conducted a study

where they found that certain domains from the AWS model predicted turnover intention among participants.

Currently, employees are expected to do more with less or “go the extra mile” (Schaufeli et al. 2009, p. 216). The economic issues and the market declines in the last several years have forced companies to reduce their workforces. The pressure to produce more with less is affecting employees’ psychological and physical health. As the studies cited have indicated, emotional exhaustion, lack of resources, and lack of control are just a few variables that predict burnout. Schaufeli et al. explained that “currently, organizations expect their employees to be proactive and show initiative, collaborate smoothly with others, take responsibility for their own professional development, and commit to high quality performance” (p. 215). Companies are starting to realize that to survive in today’s climate they need engaged employees. Engaged employees are motivated employees who go the extra mile and perform well in their jobs. Burnout prevention is currently being replaced by work engagement. Schaufeli et al. mentioned that new developments in science and corporate organizations are strengthening “the positive turn in burnout research that is the rephrasing of burnout as erosion of engagement” (p. 216). A new source of burnout could be the efforts by corporations to inspire extraordinary efforts from employees. Furthermore, Schaufeli et al. suggested that the challenge of future burnout research would be to uncover responsible psychological processes that produce burnout and engagement.

In the next chapter, the researcher for the current study will explain the methodology of the research. The reader will be introduced to several elements of the methodology including but not limited to data collection instruments, population, and

analytical methods that were used to answer the research questions. Chapter III will provide the basis for the findings and recommendations that will be explicated in Chapter IV.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In the previous chapter, the researcher reviewed the literature related to burnout and turnover in the workplace. This review included studies on burnout in different professions, including call centers in the telecommunications industry. Work factors influencing employees in different environments were reviewed. The review also examined the research on how career development support could mitigate burnout and turnover.

The current study sought to find the main predictors of job burnout and correlations among the various work factors leading to job burnout. This chapter is a description of the study's methodology. It will include a description of the research design, population, data collection, analytical methods, and limitations.

For the current study, in order to obtain valuable data, it was necessary to create a model that integrated both valid and reliable instruments used in previous burnout studies. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) explained that "validity refers to the degree to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure and, consequently, permits appropriate interpretation of scores" (p. 154). Gay et al. also stated that "reliability is the degree to which a test consistently measures whatever it is measuring" (p. 158).

Research Design

The purpose of this research was to identify the factors leading to employee job burnout in a telecommunications company in order to determine ways to retain valuable employees and assist them in developing an improved work–life balance. To achieve this purpose, the researcher utilized a quantitative research design with instruments used in similar burnout studies. Gay et al. (2009) explained the characteristics of quantitative research: identifying a research problem, reviewing the literature, selecting participants, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting data, and, finally, reporting and evaluating research. To determine the main factors leading to job burnout, the current correlational research study, involved “collecting data to determine whether, and to what degree, a relation exists between two or more variables” (p. 9).

Maslach et al. (2001) described the challenges employees face in their work environment as a significant phenomenon of the modern age. In the 1990s, empirical studies for the job burnout phenomenon provided further direction, especially when “the concept of burnout was extended to occupations beyond human services and education (e.g., clerical, computer technology, military, management)” (p. 401).

Maslach et al. (2001) explained how improvements in the methodology and statistical tools arose during the 1990s. These authors pointed to the development of longitudinal studies as a way of better measuring burnout effects over time.

The researcher created a framework to understand the influence of different work-related issues on turnover and burnout and to identify the key areas of a back office that affect employee turnover. The following combination of existing survey instruments was

utilized to evaluate an employee's perception of his or her work setting's traits that determined burnout, career support in the workplace, and turnover intentions:

- The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI-GS) Survey (Maslach & Jackson, 1981)
- The Areas of Worklife (AWS) Survey (Leiter & Maslach, 1999)
- The Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict Survey (Ashill, et al., 2008)
- The Support for Career Development Survey (London, 1993)
- The Turnover Intentions Survey (Griffeth & Hom, 2001)

These instruments were chosen because they have revealed acceptable levels of validity and reliability results in previous studies. The MBI survey reported Cronbach's alpha ratings of 0.90 for exhaustion, 0.76 for cynicism, and 0.76 for personal efficacy, according to Maslach and Jackson (1981). For the AWS survey, Leiter and Maslach (1999) reported the following Cronbach's alpha ratings: Workload = 0.66, Control = 0.82, Reward = 0.78, Community = 0.80, Fairness = 0.79, and Values = 0.72. For the Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict survey, Ashill et al. (2008) reported Cronbach's alpha ratings of 0.84 for role ambiguity and 0.74 for role conflict. The Support for Career Development survey, a study conducted by Ito and Brotheridge (2005), reported an overall Cronbach's alpha rating of 0.84 using this survey. These ratings provide evidence of good internal consistency.

Robson (2002) explained that surveys "are almost always carried out as a part of a non-experimental fixed design" (p. 233). According to Robson:

It is likely to be an inefficient and ineffective procedure, taking a great deal of time to analyze. Surveys work best with standardized questions where it is

possible to be confident that the questions mean the same thing to different respondents, a condition which is difficult to satisfy when the purpose is exploratory. The requirement is that you know what kind of information you want to collect. (p. 234)

Robson (2002) described the multiple advantages of questionnaire-based surveys. First, they provide a straightforward approach to the study of values, attitudes, beliefs, and motives. Second, they can be adapted to collect any information from virtually any human population. Last, they offer high amounts of data standardization. Some of the disadvantages are that data can be affected by the respondents' memory, knowledge, and experience, among other reasons. Additionally, respondents might not disclose their beliefs or will respond positively in order to be seen in a good light by their employer.

Robson (2002) described that in cross-sectional studies, "the focus is on relationships between and among variables in a single group" (p. 157). In cross-sectional studies, "all measures are taken over a short period of time. Widely used design typically used in conjunction with the survey method" (p. 156). For the current study, a cross-sectional survey methodology was utilized in addition to the aforementioned survey instruments, to represent data from a small sample of call center employees. The aim was to determine the main factors leading to job burnout in the call center environment.

In the current study, the researcher investigated the following research questions:

1. What are the relationships between the areas of work environment and job burnout in call centers?
2. What factors, alone or in combination, are the best predictors of job burnout?
3. What are the relationships between burnout and staff turnover?

Population

Gay et al. (2009) explained that researchers “can apply some guidelines to determine whether a sample is big enough” (p. 132). For correlational studies, like the current study, “at least 30 participants are needed to establish the existence or nonexistence of a relationship” (p. 133). The population for this research was one vendor call center with approximately 150 agents. The vendor call center was located in the Northeast area of the United States.

The researcher sent 150 surveys electronically, in order to cover the entire population. The researcher received 91 responses, which is a 60.6% response rate. The participants were back office call center agents who receive inbound calls and process order requests from online customers. These customers were from the telecommunications industry. Participation was on a strictly volunteer basis, and the participants worked in a non-union environment. The researcher collected demographic data using the variables listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographics Variables

Variable Name	Variable Type
Gender	Discrete
Race/Ethnicity	Discrete
Age	Continuous
Education Level	Discrete
Marital Status	Discrete

Table 2 illustrates the descriptive characteristics of the participant sample. In terms of education, 29.7% ($n = 27$) of the participants had a high school diploma, 50.5% ($n = 46$) of the participants had some college experience, 14.3% ($n = 13$) of the

participants had an undergraduate degree, and at least 5.5% ($n = 5$) of the participants had a graduate degree. Regarding gender, 39.6% ($n = 36$) of participants were males, and 60.4% ($n = 55$) were females. Additionally, 36.3% ($n = 33$) of the population were 18-24 years old, 33% ($n = 30$) were 25-34 years old, 14.3% ($n = 13$) were 35-44 years old, and 16.5% ($n = 15$) were 45-59 years old. Hispanics represented 34.1% ($n = 31$) of the respondents, Whites represented 33% ($n = 30$) of the respondents, Blacks represented 20.9% ($n = 19$), Asians represented 1.1% ($n = 1$) of the respondents, and Prefer Not to Answer represented 11% ($n = 10$) of the respondents. In addition, 65.9% ($n = 60$) of the population were single, while 20.9% ($n = 19$) were married, and 13.2% were ($n = 12$) divorced.

Table 2

Demographics Data Summary

Demographic Category	Frequency (<i>n</i> =91)	Percentage
Gender		
Male	36	39.6
Female	55	60.4
Age		
18–24 Years	33	36.3
25–34 Years	30	33.0
35–44 Years	13	14.3
45–59 Years	15	16.5
Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latino	31	34.1
White	30	33.0
Asian	1	1.1
Black or African American	19	20.9
Prefer Not to Answer	10	11.0
Education		
High School	27	29.7
Some College	46	50.5
Undergraduate Degree	13	14.3
Graduate Degree	5	5.5
Marital Status		
Single	60	65.9
Married	19	20.9
Divorced	12	13.2

As discussed in Chapter Two, Maslach et al. (2001) found that “age is the one [demographic] that has been most consistently related to burnout” (p. 409). Burnout is

reported more often among younger employees than among employees over 30 years old. Maslach et al. did not find gender to be a strong predictor of burnout. Some studies showed higher burnout for women while others showed higher burnout for men or no overall difference. Marital status is a demographic variable to consider, as single male employees showed extremely high burnout levels. In general, singles seem to experienced higher burnout levels than did divorced people. Employees with higher education levels showed greater levels of burnout as well. The demographic variables will be reviewed in detail in Chapter IV. In that chapter, the researcher will analyze variables identified in previous studies that showed a strong relationship to burnout.

Data Collection

The instruments used in the current study were the *Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) Survey* (Maslach & Jackson, 1981); see Appendix A; the *Areas of Worklife (AWS) Survey* (Leiter & Maslach, 1999); see Appendix B; the *Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict Survey* (Ashill, et al., 2008); see Appendix C; the *Support for Career Development Survey* (London, 1993); see Appendix D; and the *Turnover Intentions Survey* (Griffeth & Hom, 2001); see Appendix E.

The *MBI survey* was used to determine burnout levels among call center employees. The *AWS survey* was used to assess the work factor levels and their relationships with job burnout. The *Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict survey* indicated additional work factors that might influence job burnout. The *Support for Career Development survey* ascertained whether employees perceived support for their career development plans. The *Turnover Intentions Survey* was used to gauge the relationships between job burnout and turnover intentions. In order to satisfy the proper use of

established survey instruments, the researcher secured agreements from the publishers who own these surveys; see Appendix F.

The researcher secured approval from the telecom company to conduct this research through written agreements with internal leadership and the vendor management team. The researcher used electronic surveys to collect data for the study. All the surveys were merged into an online survey tool and were sent to the agents electronically. The study participants received a link to the survey in e-mail messages. Agents answered the questions and submitted their responses anonymously. The call center leadership allocated the time for internal agents to complete these surveys during their slow work periods. Each participant was given 30 minutes to complete the survey.

The data were collected using the following measurement scales:

- Nominal scale: Gender, race/ethnicity, education level, and marital status
- Interval scale: MBI, WSC, role ambiguity and role conflict, support for career development, and turnover intentions surveys
- Ratio scale: Age

The MBI-GS survey uses a 6-point Likert scale according to the frequency with which stressors are perceived. This survey contains the following subscales:

- Exhaustion - Five questions
- Cynicism - Five questions
- Professional Efficacy - Six questions

The AWS survey uses a 5-point Likert scale, which indicates the extent to which the respondent agrees with the statements presented in the survey. This survey measures the respondent's agreement with regard to the following workplace concerns:

- Workload - Five questions
- Control- Four questions
- Reward - Four questions
- Community - Five questions
- Fairness - Six questions
- Values - Four questions

The *Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict Survey* uses a 5-point Likert scale to indicate the extent to which the respondent agreed with the statements presented in the survey. There are two subscales:

- Role Ambiguity – Six questions
- Role Conflict – Five questions

The *Support for Career Development Survey* uses a 5-point Likert scale that measures the respondent's views of his or her own career development at his or her current place of employment.

The *Turnover Intentions Survey* uses three questions on a 5-point Likert scale to determine what the respondent believes about turnover intentions.

Analytical Methods

The researcher performed the data analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) program. The researcher utilized descriptive and inferential statistics for the current study.

Gay et al. (2009) explained that “descriptive statistics provide basic information about the number of participants in a study, they characteristics and how they did on a test or outcome” (p. 304). These authors explained that inferential statistics “are data

analysis techniques for determining how likely it is what results obtained from a sample or samples are the same results that would have been obtained from the entire population” (p. 326).

For Research Question 1, the researcher obtained data from both the MBI-GS Survey and the AWS Survey. Pearson Product Moment correlations were performed with data from all the subscales to examine relationships between subscales from the AWS survey and the MBI-GS survey. The relationships between AWS and exhaustion and cynicism were reviewed. Maslach et al. (1996) created the Maslach Burnout Inventory Manual where they advised that researchers can determine whether study participants are experiencing high or low burnout. For the AWS subscale results, the closer the results moved toward one, the stronger the mismatch was between the person and his or her environment. However, moving closer to five meant the match was stronger between the person and his or her environment.

For Research Question 2, the researcher obtained data from the AWS Survey. Multiple regression analysis was utilized for this question. The researcher reviewed the *p*-value in the ANOVA section of the multiple regression analysis to determine whether the result was less than or equal to .05. If the independent variable's *p* value was $< .05$, then it was a significant predictor of the dependent variable. In addition, the researcher determined the main factors that predict job burnout.

For Research Question 3, the researcher obtained data from the Turnover Intentions Survey and the MBI-GS Survey. Pearson Product Moment correlations were performed with data from all the subscales to analyze relationships between subscales from the Turnover Intentions Survey and the MBI-GS survey.

Limitations

The limitations of the current study included the participants' location, which was in only one Northeastern state. Therefore, this researcher cannot presume that the current study's findings represent the overall burnout levels of all back office call center agents in the telecommunications industry in the United States.

Conclusion

This chapter provided a detailed explanation of the research design and data analysis that was utilized in the current study. A comprehensive explanation of the statistical analyses that were utilized to address the research questions was also presented. The demographic data summary and the data collection methodology were described to provide information that helped to answer the research questions. The next chapter will discuss the research findings, based upon the data analysis. An interpretation of the data collected and conclusions and implications of the research will be presented. Finally, recommendations and directions for future research in this area will be presented.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

The previous chapter provided a detailed explanation of the methodology used in the current study. It included a description of the research design, population, data collection, analytical methods, and limitations. In this chapter, the researcher will present the findings, conclusions, and implications of the study as well as recommendations for future research. The results were compiled, analyzed, and interpreted using the statistical software program SPSS Version 20.0. The findings, conclusions, and implications will be presented after the results of the data collection and analysis are discussed.

The purpose of the current study was to identify the factors leading to employee job burnout in a telecommunications company in order to determine ways to retain valuable employees and assist them in developing a better work–life balance. In the current study, the researcher investigated the following research questions and their corresponding hypotheses:

1. What are the relationships between the areas of work environment and job burnout in call centers?

H₁: Direct relationships exist between the areas of work–life environment and job burnout.

2. What factors, alone or in combination, are the best predictors of job burnout?

H₂: The best job burnout predictors are workload, control, and reward.

3. What are the relationships between burnout and staff turnover?

H₃: A direct relationship exists between job burnout and turnover.

Findings

Research Question One

The results relating to areas of work–life environment and job burnout were statistically significant. Therefore, regarding Research Question One and its corresponding hypothesis:

What are the relationships between the areas of work environment and job burnout in call centers?

H₁: Direct relationships exist between the areas of work–life environment and job burnout.

The hypothesis was supported.

The researcher obtained data using both the MBI scales and AWS scales. Pearson product-moment correlations were performed with all of the subscales to examine relationships among the subscales scores from the AWS and MBI-GS surveys, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Pearson Correlations between MBI and AWS

		Exhaustion	Cynicism	Professional Efficacy
Control	Pearson Correlation	-.401**	-.427**	.275**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.008
Reward	Pearson Correlation	-.423**	-.548**	.403**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
Community	Pearson Correlation	-.289**	-.547**	.423**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.000	.000
Fairness	Pearson Correlation	-.498**	-.543**	.324**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.002
Values	Pearson Correlation	-.445**	-.481**	.427**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000

Note. Results from the AWS Workload subscales are not reported because of low internal consistency reliabilities.
 ** $p < .01$.
 n = 91

The correlations between the predictors and the criterion variable (Professional Efficacy) are presented in Table 3. All correlations between the predictors and the criterion were statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level, with the highest correlation between Professional Efficacy and Values (.42), and the lowest correlation between Professional Efficacy and Control (.27).

There were statistically significant relationships between all AWS variables and all burnout subscales scores. The relationships between AWS and Exhaustion and Cynicism were clear: Positive scores in AWS were negatively correlated with Exhaustion and Cynicism, but were positively correlated with Efficacy. In other words, the more

Control, Reward, Community, Fairness, and Values employees felt the less Exhaustion and Cynicism they experienced. In addition, the more Control, Reward, Community, Fairness, and Values employees felt the more Professional Efficacy they experienced.

The researcher found that direct relationships existed between the areas of work–life environment and job burnout as follows:

A statistically significant negative relationship existed between Control and Exhaustion, $r(89) = -.40, p < .05$. A statistically significant negative relationship existed between Control and Cynicism, $r(89) = -.42, p < .05$. A statistically significant positive relationship existed between Control and Professional Efficacy, $r(89) = .27, p < .05$.

A statistically significant negative relationship existed between Reward and Exhaustion, $r(89) = -.42, p < .05$. A statistically significant negative relationship existed between Reward and Cynicism, $r(89) = -.54, p < .05$. A statistically significant positive relationship existed between Reward and Professional Efficacy, $r(89) = .40, p < .05$.

A statistically significant negative relationship existed between Community and Exhaustion, $r(89) = -.28, p < .05$. A statistically significant negative relationship existed between Community and Cynicism, $r(89) = -.54, p < .05$. A statistically significant positive relationship existed between Community and Professional Efficacy, $r(89) = .42, p < .05$.

A statistically significant negative relationship existed between Fairness and Exhaustion, $r(89) = -.49, p < .05$. A statistically significant negative relationship existed between Fairness and Cynicism, $r(89) = -.59, p < .05$. A statistically significant positive relationship existed between Fairness and Professional Efficacy, $r(89) = .32, p < .05$.

A statistically significant negative relationship existed between Values and Exhaustion, $r(89) = -.44, p < .05$. A statistically significant negative relationship existed between Values and Cynicism, $r(89) = -.48, p < .05$. A statistically significant positive relationship existed between Values and Professional Efficacy, $r(89) = .42, p < .05$.

Research Question Two

The researcher obtained data from the AWS scales and conducted multiple linear regression analyses to address the second research question. The first multiple regression was performed between the criterion variable Exhaustion and the AWS subscales scores. The second was performed between the criterion variable Cynicism and the AWS subscales scores. The third was performed between the criterion variable Professional Efficacy and the AWS subscales scores. Therefore, regarding Research Question Two and its corresponding hypothesis:

What factors, alone or in combination, are the best predictors of job burnout?

H₂: The best job burnout predictors are Workload, Control, and Reward.

The hypothesis was not supported.

To identify the best job burnout predictors, the researcher evaluated the coefficient results for the three multiple linear regressions performed between the AWS subscales and Exhaustion, Cynicism, and Professional Efficacy. The results showed that the best predictors were Control, Fairness and Values from the Exhaustion subscale.

Exhaustion and AWS Multiple Linear Regression.

The correlations between the predictors and the criterion variable (Exhaustion) are presented in Table 4. All correlations between the predictors and the criterion were statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level, with the highest correlation between

Exhaustion and Fairness (-.49), and the lowest correlation between Exhaustion and Community (-.29).

The best job burnout predictors for the multiple linear regressions of Exhaustion and AWS were Control, Fairness and Values, as shown in Table 4. Overall, the regression was statistically significant, $F(5, 85) = 9.21, p < .05, R^2 = .35$, and of the predictors investigated, Fairness ($\beta = -.34, t(85) = -2.64, p < .05$), Values ($\beta = -.29, t(85) = -2.61, p < .05$) and Control ($\beta = -.20, t(85) = -2.01, p < .05$) were statistically significant, as presented in Table 4. Reward was not a significant predictor of Exhaustion, $\beta = -.08, t(85) = -.603, p > .05$. Community was not a significant predictor of Exhaustion, $\beta = .23, t(85) = 1.82, p > .05$.

Table 4

Exhaustion and AWS - Multiple Linear Regressions - Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	6.156	.738		8.343	.000
Control	-.351	.174	-.206	-2.016	.047
Reward	-.167	.278	-.081	-.603	.548
Community	.411	.226	.230	1.821	.072
Fairness	-.608	.230	-.344	-2.641	.010
Values	-.571	.219	-.291	-2.613	.011

Note. Results from the AWS Workload subscales are not reported because of their low internal consistency reliabilities. Dependent variable: Exhaustion average score.

Yockey (2011) explained that “measures of effect size in regression are given by R^2 ” (p. 186). Cohen (as cited in Yockey, 2011, p. 186) described R^2 values of .02 as

indicating a small effect size, .13 as medium, and .26 as large. In this multiple linear regression analysis, the predictors accounted for 35% of the variance in Exhaustion, as shown in Table 5 in the *R* Square column.

Table 5

Exhaustion and AWS - Multiple Linear Regressions - Model Summary

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	<i>SEM</i>
1	.593 ^a	.351	.313	1.431

Note. Predictors: (constant), Values, Control, Fairness, Community, Reward.

Because the *p*-value is less than .05, the overall regression model (with all the predictors included) was statistically significant according to the ANOVA results, as shown in Table 6. The predictors collectively accounted for a statistically significant amount of variance in Exhaustion.

Table 6

Exhaustion and the AWS - Multiple Linear Regression ANOVA^a

Model	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Regression	94.344	5	18.869	9.210	.000 ^b
Residual	174.142	85	2.049		
Total	268.486	90			

Note. Dependent variable: Exhaustion average score. Predictors: (constant), Values, Control, Fairness, Community, Reward.

Cynicism and AWS Multiple Linear Regression

The correlations between the predictors and the criterion variable (Cynicism) are presented in Table 3. All correlations between the predictors and the criterion were

statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level, with the highest correlation between Cynicism and Reward (-.54), and the lowest correlation between Cynicism and Control (-.42).

The researcher found no significant predictors for Cynicism and AWS in the multiple linear regression, as shown in Table 7. Overall, the regression was statistically significant, $F(5, 85) = 12.31, p < .05, R^2 = .42$, and none of the investigated predictors were significant predictors of Cynicism. Control was not a significant predictor of Cynicism, $\beta = -.13, t(85) = -1.41, p > .05$. Reward was not a significant predictor of Cynicism, $\beta = -.16, t(85) = -1.28, p > .05$. Community was not a significant predictor of Cynicism, $\beta = .18, t(85) = 1.57, p > .05$. Fairness was not a significant predictor of Cynicism, $\beta = -.17, t(85) = -1.44, p > .05$. Values was not a significant predictor of Cynicism, $\beta = -.15, t(85) = -1.44, p > .05$.

Table 7

Cynicism and AWS - Multiple Linear Regressions - Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	6.599	.654		10.091	.000
Control	-.218	.154	-.137	-1.414	.161
Reward	-.315	.246	-.163	-1.280	.204
Community	.315	.200	-.188	-1.574	.119
Fairness	-.294	.204	-.178	-1.441	.153
Values	-.279	.194	-.152	-1.441	.153

Note. Results from the AWS Workload subscales are not reported because of their low internal consistency reliabilities. Dependent variable: Cynicism average score.

In this multiple linear regression, the predictors accounted for 42% of the variance in Cynicism, as seen in Table 8, in the R^2 column.

Table 8

Cynicism and AWS - Multiple Linear Regressions - Model Summary

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	SEM
1	.648 ^a	.420	.386	1.269

Note. Predictors: (constant), Values, Control, Fairness, Community, Reward.

Because the p -value was less than .05, the overall regression model (with all the predictors included) was statistically significant, according to the ANOVA results, as shown in Table 9. The predictors collectively accounted for a statistically significant amount of variance in Cynicism.

Table 9

Cynicism and the AWS-Multiple Linear Regression ANOVA^a

Model	SS	df	MS	F	$Sig.$
Regression	99.068	5	19.814	12.311	.000 ^b
Residual	136.799	85	1.609		
Total	235.867	90			

Note. Dependent variable: Cynicism average score. Predictors: (constant), Values, Control, Fairness, Community, Reward.

Professional Efficacy and AWS Multiple Linear Regression.

The researcher found no significant predictors for Professional Efficacy and AWS-Multiple Linear Regression, as shown in Table 10. Overall, the regression was statistically significant, $F(5, 85) = 5.55, p < .05, R^2 = .24$, and none of the investigated

predictors were significant predictors of Professional Efficacy. Control was not a significant predictor of Professional Efficacy, $\beta = .06$, $t(85) = .55$, $p > .05$. Reward was not a significant predictor of Professional Efficacy, $\beta = .16$, $t(85) = 1.10$, $p > .05$. Community was not a significant predictor of Professional Efficacy, $\beta = .19$, $t(85) = 1.39$, $p > .05$. Fairness was not a significant predictor of Professional Efficacy, $\beta = -.04$, $t(85) = -.32$, $p > .05$. Values was not a significant predictor of Professional Efficacy, $\beta = .23$, $t(85) = 1.93$, $p > .05$.

Table 10

Professional Efficacy and AWS - Multiple Linear Regressions - Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	2.393	.508		4.711	.000
Control	.066	.120	.061	.550	.583
Reward	.211	.191	.160	1.106	.272
Community	.217	.155	.190	1.394	.167
Fairness	-.051	.158	-.045	-.322	.748
Values	.292	.150	.233	1.939	.056

Note. Results from the AWS Workload subscales are not reported because of their low internal consistency reliabilities. Dependent variable: Professional average score

In this multiple linear regression, the predictors accounted for 24% of the variance in Professional Efficacy, as shown in Table 11 in the R Square column.

Table 11

Professional Efficacy and AWS - Multiple Linear Regressions - Model Summary

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	<i>SEM</i>
1	.496 ^a	.246	.202	.985

Note. Predictors: (constant), Values, Control, Fairness, Community, Reward.

Because the *p*-value was less than .05, the overall regression model (with all the predictors included) was statistically significant, according to the ANOVA results, as shown in Table 12. The predictors collectively accounted for a statistically significant amount of variance in Professional Efficacy.

Table 12

Professional Efficacy and the AWS - Multiple Linear Regression ANOVA^a

Model	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Regression	26.948	5	5.390	5.553	.000 ^b
Residual	82.499	85	.971		
Total	109.447	90			

Note. Dependent variable: Cynicism average score. Predictors: (constant), Values, Control, Fairness, Community, Reward.

Research Question Three

The relationships between Burnout and Turnover Intentions were clear, and positive scores in burnout were positively correlated with the first two questions on the right, with the exception of Professional Efficacy, as shown in Table 14. Therefore, regarding Research Question Three and its corresponding hypothesis:

What are the relationships between burnout and staff turnover?

H₃: A direct relationship exists between job burnout and turnover.

The hypothesis was supported.

As shown in Table 13, results for the first two questions from the Turnover Intentions Survey indicated that, on average, employees were not looking for or thinking about getting a new job. In addition, the results indicated that employees were willing to accept changes in their current jobs.

Table 13

Descriptive Statistics MBI Scales and Turnover Intentions

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>
Exhaustion Total Score	11.23	8.636	91
Cynicism Total Score	9.76	8.094	91
Professional Efficacy Total Score	29.68	6.625	91
Do you have any thoughts of leaving your current job? (1=Definitely Not, 2=Not, 3=Maybe, 4=Yes, 5=Definitely Yes)	2.26	1.191	91
Are you looking for a new job? (1=Definitely Not, 2=Not, 3=Maybe, 4=Yes, 5=Definitely Yes)	2.07	1.172	91
Are you willing to accept changes in your current job? (1= Definitely Not, 2=Not, 3=Maybe, 4=Yes, 5=Definitely Yes)	4.27	.761	91

The researcher concluded that employees were not likely to leave the organization and were actually open to changes in their current job duties. The researcher found that direct relationships existed between the areas of work–life environment and job burnout as follows:

A statistically significant positive relationship existed between Exhaustion and the item: “Do you have any thoughts of leaving your current job?” $r(89) = .26, p < .05$. A statistically significant positive relationship existed between Exhaustion and “Are you looking for a new job?” $r(89) = .26, p < .05$. No significant negative relationship existed between Exhaustion and “Are you willing to accept changes?” $r(89) = -.09, p > .05$.

A statistically significant positive relationship existed between Cynicism and “Do you have any thoughts of leaving your current job?” $r(89) = .45, p < .05$. A statistically significant positive relationship existed between Cynicism and “Are you looking for a new job?” $r(89) = .40, p < .05$. No significant negative relationship existed between Cynicism and “Are you willing to accept changes?” $r(89) = -.12, p > .05$.

A statistically significant negative relationship existed between Professional Efficacy and “Do you have any thoughts of leaving your current job?” $r(89) = -.28, p < .05$. A statistically significant negative relationship existed between Professional Efficacy and “Are you looking for a new job?” $r(89) = -.25, p < .05$. No significant positive relationship existed between Professional Efficacy and “Are you willing to accept changes?” $r(89) = .18, p > .05$.

The researcher obtained Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients to evaluate relationships among all the subscales from the Turnover Intentions survey and the MBI-GS survey. Statistically significant relationships existed between the first two

questions from the Turnover Intentions survey (“Do you have any thoughts of leaving your current job?” and “Are you looking for a new job?”).

Table 14

Pearson Correlations between MBI Scales and Turnover Intentions

		Exhaustion	Cynicism	Professional Efficacy
Do you have any	Pearson Correlation	.265**	.452**	-.285**
thoughts of leaving	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.000	.006
your current job?				
Are you looking for a	Pearson Correlation	.262**	.403**	-.252**
new job?	Sig. (2-tailed)	.012	.000	.016
Are you willing to	Pearson Correlation	-.099**	-.124**	.189**
accept changes in your	Sig. (2-tailed)	.349	-.240	.072
current job?				
<i>Note. p < .01.</i>				
<i>n = 91</i>				

Additional Findings

The researcher utilized the MBI manual (Maslach et al., 1996) criteria displayed in Table 15 to determine whether the participants experienced burnout syndrome. This table classifies Exhaustion, Cynicism and Professional Efficacy into three categories: high, medium, and low. Each category uses different scales based on the number of questions utilized per subscale. According to Maslach, a participant may be classified with a high degree of burnout if scores in Exhaustion and Cynicism are high and if scores in Professional Efficacy are low.

Table 15

MBI - General Survey Scoring Key

	Exhaustion	Cynicism	Professional Efficacy
High	16 or over	11 or over	30 or over
Moderate	11–15	6–10	24–29
Low	0–10	0–5	0–23

The burnout classification can be found in Table 16, where 28.6% of participants ($n = 26$) were classified with burnout, and 71.4% ($n = 65$) were classified with no burnout. However, most participants showed involvement in some of the burnout subscales. For the emotional exhaustion subscale, the highest percentage of participants fell in the low category, at 54.9% ($n = 50$), followed by 26.4% ($n = 24$) in the high category and 18.7% ($n = 17$) for the medium category. At least 45.1% ($n = 41$) of participants were categorized as either medium or high in terms of emotional exhaustion.

On the other hand, in terms of subscale professional efficacy, 16.5% ($n = 15$) of participants fell in the low category, 56.0% ($n = 51$) fell in the high category, and 27.5% ($n = 25$) fell in the medium category. Regarding participant cynicism, 45.1% ($n = 41$) of participants had high levels of cynicism, followed by 17.6% ($n = 16$) at medium levels and 37.4% ($n = 34$) at low levels.

Table 16

Burnout Classification

Burnout Subscales	Category	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Burnout Syndrome	Yes	26	28.6	28.6
	No	65	71.4	100.0
	Total	91	100.0	
Emotional Exhaustion	Low	50	54.9	54.9
	Medium	15	16.4	71.3
	High	26	28.5	100.0
	Total	91	100.0	
Cynicism	Low	34	37.4	37.4
	Medium	16	17.6	55.0
	High	41	45.1	100.0
	Total	91	100.0	
Professional Efficacy	Low	15	16.5	16.5
	Medium	25	27.5	44.0
	High	51	56.0	100.0
	Total	91	100.0	

The Cronbach's alpha ratings reported were 0.90 for exhaustion, 0.76 for cynicism, and 0.76 for personal efficacy (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). For the current study, the Cronbach's alpha ratings are presented in Table 17. These values indicate that the internal reliability was acceptable.

Table 17

Cronbach's Alpha Ratings for MBI Subscales of Exhaustion, Cynicism and Professional Security

MBI Subscale	Number	<i>n</i>	Cronbach's Alpha
Exhaustion	5	91	0.91
Cynicism	5	91	0.82
Professional Efficacy	6	91	0.77
<i>n</i> = 91			

For the AWS subscales results, the closer the results are to one, the stronger the mismatch between the person and his or her environment. On the other hand, the closer the results are to five, the stronger the match between the person and environment. Table 18 shows the AWS subscales with their descriptive statistics.

Table 18

AWS Subscales - Descriptive Statistics

	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Workload	91	1	5	3.63	.70
Control	91	1	5	3.09	1.01
Reward	91	1	5	3.42	.84
Community	91	1	5	3.50	.97
Fairness	91	1	5	2.80	.98
Values	91	1	5	3.48	.88
Valid <i>n</i> (Listwise)	91				

For the AWS survey, Leiter and Maslach (1999) reported the following Cronbach's alpha ratings: Workload = 0.66, Control = 0.82, Reward = 0.78, Community = 0.80, Fairness = 0.79, and Values = 0.72. For the current study, the researcher obtained the following Cronbach's alpha ratings, as shown in Table 19: Workload = 0.55, Control = 0.82, Reward = 0.78, Community = 0.85, Fairness = 0.89, and Values = 0.80. The researcher decided not to include any subsequent results from the Workload subscale due to its low reliability.

Table 19

AWS Cronbach's Alpha

AWS Subscale	Number	<i>n</i>	Cronbach's Alpha
Workload	5	91	0.55
Control	4	91	0.82
Reward	4	91	0.78
Community	5	91	0.85
Fairness	6	91	0.89
Values	4	91	0.80
<i>n</i> = 91			

The MBI-GS scales with the group frequency ratings of each subscale are presented in Table 20. Participants reported that they felt mentally exhausted at least once per month ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 1.72$). The participants felt cynicism at least once a year ($M = 1.95$, $SD = 1.61$). The participants felt professional efficacy at least once per week ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.10$).

The numbers can be interpreted based on the same frequency scale used in rating each MBI-GS item:

- 0 - Never
- 1 - A few times a year or less
- 2 - Once a month or less
- 3 - A few times a month
- 4 - Once a week
- 5 - A few times a week
- 6 - Every day

The variation in response to the MBI-GS scales indicates the group standard deviations of the individuals' frequency of burnout. The smaller the standard deviation, the higher the agreement was among group members. A value of 0.0 would mean complete agreement among group members.

Table 20

MBI-General Survey - Means and Standard Deviations

	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Exhaustion	91	0	6	2.25	1.727
Average Score					
Cynicism Average	91	0	6	1.95	1.619
Score					
Professional	91	1	6	4.95	1.103
Efficacy Average					
Valid <i>n</i> (listwise)	91				

The three MBI-GS scales for the current study were compared to a general population of over 19,000 people, across a diverse range of occupations, as shown in Table 21. Higher scores in Exhaustion or Cynicism indicate more burnout, whereas

higher scores in Professional Efficacy signify less burnout. The results of the current study were close to values in the general population dataset.

Table 21

Group Frequency Ratings on the MBI-GS Compared to Norms

	The Current Study Frequency	General Population Frequency
Exhaustion	2.2	2.4
Cynicism	2.0	1.8
Professional Efficacy	4.9	4.4

The AWS scales with their group frequency ratings are presented in Table 22. The Workload group frequency results fell between *Hard to Decide* and *Agree* ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.72$). The Control group frequency results fell between *Hard to Decide* and *Agree* ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.01$). The Reward group frequency results fell between *Hard to Decide* and *Agree* ($M = 3.42$, $SD = .83$). The Community group frequency results fell between *Hard to Decide* and *Agree* ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .96$). The Fairness group frequency results fell between *Disagree* and *Hard to Decide* ($M = 2.80$, $SD = .97$). The Values group frequency results fell between *Hard to Decide* and *Agree* ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .88$).

The numbers can be interpreted based on the same frequency scale used in rating each MBI-GS item:

- 1 – Strongly Disagree
- 2 - Disagree
- 3 – Hard to Decide
- 4 - Agree
- 5 – Strongly Agree

Table 22

AWS Survey - Means and Standard Deviations

	<i>n</i>	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Workload	91	0	5	3.63	.700
Control	91	0	5	3.09	1.014
Reward	91	1	5	3.42	.837
Community	91	1	5	3.50	.966
Fairness	91	1	5	2.80	.978
Values	91	1	5	3.48	.880
Valid <i>n</i> (listwise)	91				

The six AWS scales for the current study were compared to a general population of over 20,000 people, across a diverse range of occupations, as shown in Table 23. The AWS focuses on similarities among group member's perceptions of the organization, and then measures the impact of Workload, Control, Reward, Community, Fairness, and Values on the organization. The results for the current study were close to values in the general population dataset.

Table 23

Group Frequency Ratings on the AWS Compared to Norms

	The Current Study Frequency	General Population Frequency
Workload	3.6	3.0
Control	3.1	3.3
Reward	3.4	3.2
Community	3.5	3.4
Fairness	2.8	2.8
Values	3.5	2.4

Pearson product-moment correlations were analyzed for data from the Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict Survey, the Support for Career Development Survey, and the MBI survey, to examine relationships, as shown in Table 24. All correlations were statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level, with the exception of the relationship between Role Conflict and Exhaustion. Statistically significant relationships existed between variables and all burnout subscales. The relationships between Role Ambiguity and Exhaustion, Cynicism, and Professional Efficacy were clear. Role Ambiguity and Support for Career Development were negatively correlated with Exhaustion and Cynicism, but positively correlated with Professional Efficacy. On the other hand, positive scores in Role Conflict and Support for Career Development were positively correlated with Exhaustion and Cynicism, but negatively correlated with Professional Efficacy.

Table 24

Pearson Correlations Between MBI and Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, and Support for Career Development

		Exhaustion	Cynicism	Professional Efficacy
Role	Pearson Correlation	-.451**	-.499**	.355**
Ambiguity	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001
Role Conflict	Pearson Correlation	.187**	.326**	-.310**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.075	.002	.003
Support for	Pearson Correlation	-.438**	-.567**	.352**
Career	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001
Development				

Note. $p < .01$.
N = 91.

The researcher conducted multiple linear regression analyses for Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, and Support for Career Development and the three MBI subscales. Role Ambiguity was the best job burnout predictor for the multiple linear regressions of Exhaustion, Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, and Support for Career Development. Overall, the regression was statistically significant, $F(3, 87) = 10.21, p < .05, R^2 = .26$. Of the predictors investigated, Role Ambiguity ($\beta = -.29, t(87) = -2.56, p < .05$), was statistically significant. Role Conflict was not a significant predictor of exhaustion, $\beta = .12, t(87) = 1.33, p > .05$. Support for Career Development was not a significant predictor of exhaustion, $\beta = -.23, t(87) = .052, p > .05$.

Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, and Support for Career Development were all significant predictors the multiple linear regression for the Cynicism and the Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, and Support for Career Development. Overall, the regression

was statistically significant $F(3, 87) = 20.57, p < .05, R^2 = .41$. Of the predictors investigated, Role Ambiguity ($\beta = -.25, t(87) = -2.49, p < .05$) was statistically significant. Role Conflict was a significant predictor of cynicism, $\beta = .24, t(87) = 2.90, p < .05$. Support for Career Development was a statistically significant predictor of cynicism, $\beta = -.36, t(87) = -3.46, p < .05$.

Role Ambiguity was a significant predictor for the multiple regressions of Professional Efficacy, Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, and Support for Career Development. Overall, the regression was statistically significant, $F(3, 87) = 8.33, p < .05, R^2 = .22$. Of the predictors investigated, Role Ambiguity ($\beta = -.24, t(87) = 2.01, p > .05$) was not statistically significant. Role Conflict was a statistically significant predictor of professional efficacy, $\beta = .26, t(87) = -2.75, p < .05$. Support for Career Development was not a statistically significant predictor of professional efficacy, $\beta = .15, t(87) = 1.29, p > .05$.

Conclusions

The researcher was able to determine the number of participants identified as suffering burnout. The burnout classification can be found in Table 4, where 28.6% of participants ($n = 26$) were classified with burnout and 71.4% ($n = 65$) were classified with no burnout. Results from the current study were clearly consistent with the existing burnout literature and the results shared in the MBI and AWS studies, where the general results from thousands of participants exposed to these surveys are similar to the results in the current study.

According to Maslach, Schaufeli and Leiter (2008), the three subscales of the MBI survey provide three different scores for every participant. This unique way of

measuring burnout has posed a notable statistical challenge for researchers trying to understand the burnout phenomenon. The reason why the scores of subscales are generally studied separately is so researchers can study the interrelationships between the subscales and other factors affecting them (e.g., control, fairness, and role conflict).

Maslach et al. concluded that:

There was no a priori theory about whether and how these subscales scores should be combined, and there was the risk that any aggregate score will mask important variations in its component parts. Thus, from a purely research perspective, the decision to treat the three MBI dimensions separately makes sense. (p. 97)

In the current study, medium to high levels of Exhaustion were found in 45.1% ($n = 41$) of the participants, medium to high levels of Cynicism were found in 62.7% ($n = 57$), and medium to high levels of Professional Efficacy were found in 83.5% ($n = 76$).

Regarding Research Question One and its corresponding hypothesis:

1. What are the relationships between the areas of work environment and job burnout in call centers?

H₁: Direct relationships exist between the areas of work–life environment and job burnout.

The data provided statistically significant results concerning this question. All correlations were statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level. Statistically significant relationships existed between all the AWS variables and all the burnout subscales. The relationships between the AWS variables and Exhaustion and Cynicism presented negative correlations. The relationships between the AWS and Professional Efficacy

presented positive correlations. These findings are consistent with the AWS manual results, and correlations between the AWS variables and the MBI subscales showed similar results.

Regarding Research Question Two and its corresponding hypothesis:

2. What factors, alone or in combination, are the best predictors of job burnout?

H₂: The best job burnout predictors are workload, control, and reward.

The best job burnout predictors in the multiple linear regressions for Exhaustion and AWS were Control, Fairness and Values, as shown in Table 4. Overall, the regression was statistically significant, $F(5, 85) = 9.21, p < .05, R^2 = .35$. Contrary to expectations, only three (Control, Fairness and Values) of the six AWS subscales were found to be good predictors of Exhaustion. None of the other three work environments contributed any statistically significant correlations to Cynicism or Professional Efficacy. Maslach et al. (2008) explained that “the concept of exhaustion captures the basic stress experienced by an individual, as it refers to feelings of being overextended and depleted of one’s emotional and physical resources” (p. 98).

Regarding Research Question Three and its corresponding hypothesis:

3. What are the relationships between burnout and staff turnover?

H₃: A direct relationship exists between job burnout and turnover.

The researcher found relationships between Burnout and Turnover Intentions. Clearly, Burnout scores were positively correlated with the first two questions on the right, with the exception of Professional Efficacy. Professional Efficacy was not correlated with the last question of the Turnover Intention survey: “Are you willing to accept changes?” The mean for this question was 4.27, which indicated that the

participants were willing to accept changes, on average. The first question “Do you have any thoughts of leaving your current job?” produced a mean of 2.26, which indicated that the participants, in general, were not having thoughts about leaving their jobs. The second question “Are you looking for a new job?” produced a mean of 2.07, indicating that the participants were not generally looking for a new job, on average.

From the additional findings of the current study, Cynicism was statistically significant when correlated with Role Ambition, Role Conflict, and Support for Career Development. Role Ambition and Support for Career Development were negatively correlated, while Role Conflict was positively correlated with Cynicism. Role Ambition, Role Conflict, and Support for Career Development were all significant predictors of Cynicism. This is a key discovery of the current study, especially when the researcher found no significant predictors of Cynicism from the multiple linear regression analysis of the AWS subscales, as shown in Table 7. Additionally, Role Ambition was significantly related and a significant predictor of Exhaustion and Professional Efficacy, as shown in Table 24. Role Conflict was also a significant predictor of Professional Efficacy.

Implications and Recommendations

The purpose of the current study was to identify the factors leading to employee job burnout in a telecommunications company, in order to determine ways to retain valuable employees and assist them in developing improved work–life balance. The current study advances understanding of the relationships among role stressors, work environment factors, and the three dimensions of job burnout in an e-commerce, back-office environment. The current study also analyzed the relationships among the three

dimensions of job burnout and intentions to leave the organization. All relationships between the AWS subscales and the three dimensions of job burnout were statistically significant. However, the best predictors of burnout were Control, Fairness and Values. These relationships presented negative correlations with Exhaustion. As Control, Fairness and Values increased, Emotional Exhaustion decreased. A recommendation to the call center's management team would be to ensure that supervisors treat people with respect and to treat people fairly, without favoritism. Additionally, employees should be encouraged to participate in decision-making processes. According to Leiter and Maslach (1999):

Fairness is the extent to which decisions at work are perceived as being fair and people are treated with respect. Fairness communicates respect and confirms people's self-worth. Mutual respect between people is central to a shared sense of community. Unfairness can occur when there is inequity of workload or pay, or when there is cheating, or when evaluations and promotions are handled inappropriately. If procedures for grievance or dispute resolution do not allow for both parties to have voice, then those will be judged as unfair. (p. 6)

Regarding Values, the recommendation would be to make sure that operational processes and the company's mission and vision statements are clear to all employees. When employees perceive a value conflict on the job, their engagement with work tends to decrease. Employees might find themselves choosing work based on personal or corporate values rather than on what has been assigned to them. According to Leiter and Maslach (1999):

The values area is at the heart of people's relationship with their work. It encompasses the ideals and motivations that originally attracted them to the job. It is the motivating connection between the worker and the workplace that goes beyond the utilitarian exchange of time for money or advancement. Contributing to a meaningful personal goal is a powerful incentive for individuals. When this work contributes as well to the organizational mission, people may be rewarded with additional opportunities for meaningful work. As such, mutually compatible values produce a self-perpetuating dynamic that supports engagement. (p. 7)

In terms of Turnover Intentions, the researcher found positive relationships between two of the three job burnout dimensions (Exhaustion, Cynicism) and the first two questions of the Turnover Intentions. As Exhaustion and Cynicism increased, Turnover Intentions also increased. Turnover is the result of an employee leaving a company as a result of organizational events, working conditions, and other factors influencing the employee's attitude toward the company. In the current study, turnover intentions were analyzed rather than the actual turnover. There were no statistically significant correlations between the last question of Turnover Intentions and Exhaustion and Cynicism, where employees were asked if they were willing to accept changes in their current job. The typical answer was "yes." They would be willing to accept changes. A recommendation to reduce turnover intentions would be to improve working conditions by allowing employees to express their ideas and concerns and for the company to value the employees' contributions.

A key discovery for the current study was to recognize that there were other burnout predictors in addition to the AWS subscales. These other predictors were Role

Ambiguity, Role Conflict, and Support for Career Development. Role ambiguity was a significant predictor for all of the three job burnout dimensions. The Business Dictionary online defines role ambiguity as “a lack of clarity about expected behavior from a job or position” (role conflict, n.d.). Role conflict was found to be a significant predictor for Cynicism and Professional Efficacy. According to Leiter and Maslach (1999):

Role conflict arises from multiple authorities with conflicting demands or incongruent values, and people in this situation cannot exercise effective control in their job. Contradictory demands interfere with their capacity to set priorities or to commit themselves fully to their work. Moreover, role conflict is, almost by definition, a direct signal of an authority problem at work. (p. 4).

Some recommendations to minimize role conflict and role ambiguity would be to establish ongoing training about the employees’ roles and processes and to empower employees to make decisions that would be in alignment with the company’s mission and vision. When in doubt, employees should be encouraged to approach their management leaders to obtain clarification, answers, and guidelines for complex issues.

Future research on e-commerce call centers could include a longitudinal study where the burnout subscales, AWS subscales, role stressors, and turnover intentions variables could be observed repeatedly over time. According to Leiter and Maslach (1999), burnout appears within the first year of employment. In addition, researching actual turnover instead of turnover intention could also provide valuable information to determine who stays and who leaves from the participants deemed as suffering low, medium, or high burnout. Another recommendation would be to track and analyze the

impact of job burnout on job satisfaction and performance. Understanding how burnout develops could be analyzed by reviewing career stages, along with age and gender.

The important findings of the current study for call center leadership, and especially for e-commerce call centers, are the various significant relationships determined from the multiple scales for burnout and turnover intentions. Knowing the effects that some of the AWS subscales (Control, Fairness and Values) and role stressors (Role Ambiguity and Role Conflict) have on job burnout could help these management teams to understand their work environments and implement training and processes to retain valuable employees. The call center leadership could implement educational training or seminars to enhance the employees' capacity to cope with their workplace. However, the organization should not focus on changing the individual alone; instead, the organization should make an effort to change itself. Finally, encouraging employees to be more flexible and to provide ideas to improve the workplace would serve both employees and the organization well.

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Appendix A

Descriptions of the Six Areas of Worklife Survey Scales

Descriptions of the Six Areas of Worklife Survey Scales

Workload	<p>The amount of work to be done in a given time. A manageable workload provides the opportunity to do what one enjoys, to pursue career objectives, and to develop professionally. A crisis in workload is not a matter of simply stretching to meet a new challenge, but of going beyond human limits.</p> <p>Sample Item: I do not have time to do the work that must be done.</p>
Control	<p>The opportunity to make choices and decisions, to solve problems, and to contribute to the fulfillment of responsibilities. A good match occurs when there is a correspondence between control and accountability. A mismatch occurs when people lack sufficient control to fulfill the responsibilities for which they are accountable.</p> <p>Sample Item: I have control over how I do my work.</p>
Reward	<p>Recognition—financial and social—for contributions on the job. A meaningful reward system acknowledges contributions to work and provides clear indications of what the organization values. People experience a lack of recognition as devaluing their work and themselves.</p> <p>Sample Item: I receive recognition from others for my work.</p>
Community	<p>The quality of an organization’s social environment. People thrive in communities characterized by support, collaboration, and positive feelings. Mismatches occur when there is no sense of positive connection with others at work.</p> <p>Sample Item: People trust one another to fulfill their roles.</p>
Fairness	<p>The extent to which the organization has consistent and equitable rules for everyone. An important element is the extent to which resources are allocated according to generally understood and consistent procedures. Fairness communicates respect for the members of an organization’s community. A lack of fairness indicates confusion in an organization’s values and in its relationships with people.</p> <p>Sample Item: Resources are allocated fairly here.</p>
Values	<p>Values are what are important to the organization and to its members. When organizational and personal values are congruent, successes are shared. Mismatches occur when differences exist between an organization’s values and the values of its staff, or if the organization does not practice its stated values.</p> <p>Sample Item: My values and the organization’s values are alike.</p>

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Appendix B

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) Survey

The Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) Survey

How often:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	A few times a year or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

How Often

0-6

Statements:

1. ___ I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. ___ I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. ___ I feel tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.
4. ___ Working all day is really a strain for me.
5. ___ I can effectively solve the problems that arise in my work.
6. ___ I feel burned out from my work.
7. ___ I feel I am making an effective contribution to what this organization does.
8. ___ I've become less interested in my work since I started this job.
9. ___ I have become less enthusiastic about my work.
10. ___ In my opinion, I am good at my job.
11. ___ I feel exhilarated when I accomplish something at work.
12. ___ I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
13. ___ I just want to do my job and not be bothered.
14. ___ I have become more cynical about whether my work contributes anything.
15. ___ I doubt the significance of my work.
16. ___ At my work, I feel confident that I am effective at getting things done.

Appendix C

The Areas of Worklife Survey (AWS)

Areas of Worklife Survey (AWS)

Please use the following rating scale to indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements. Please mark on the answer sheet the number corresponding to your answer.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Hard to Decide	Agree Strongly	Agree

Workload	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Hard to Decide	Agree Strongly	Agree
1. I do not have time to do the work that must be done.					
2. I work intensely for prolonged periods of time.					
3. I have so much work to do on the job that it takes me away from my personal interests.					
4. I have enough time to do what's important in my job.					
5. I leave my work behind when I go home at the end of the workday.					
Control					
6. I have control over how I do my work.					
7. I can influence management to obtain the equipment and space I need for my work					
8. I have professional autonomy /independence in my work.					
I have influence in the decisions affecting my work.					
Reward					
10. I receive recognition from others for my work.					
11. My work is appreciated					
12. My efforts usually go unnoticed					
13. I do not get recognized for all the things I contribute					

Community					
14. People trust one another to fulfill their roles.					
15. I am a member of a supportive work group.					
16. Members of my work group cooperate with one another.					
17. Members of my work group communicate openly					
18. I don't feel close to my colleagues.					
Fairness					
19. Resources are allocated fairly here.					
20. Opportunities are decided solely on merit					
21. There are effective appeal procedures available when I question the fairness of a decision.					
22. Management treats all employees fairly.					
23. Favoritism determines how decisions are made at work.					
24. It's not what you know but who you know that determines a career here.					
Values					
25. My values and the Organization's values are alike					
26. The Organization's goals influence my day to day work activities.					
27. My personal career goals are consistent with the Organization's stated goals.					
28. The Organization is committed to quality.					

Appendix D

The Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Survey

The Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity Survey

How Often:

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Seldom	Often	Almost Always	Always

How Often

1-5

Statements:

1. _____ I know what is expected of me at work
2. _____ I know what my responsibilities are
3. _____ My job has clearly defined objectives, targets and goals
4. _____ My team leader clearly explains what needs to be done
5. _____ I know exactly how much authority I have
6. _____ I know how my performance is going to be evaluated
7. _____ I have adequate resources to complete my job tasks
8. _____ When completing a task I get conflicting information from two or more people
9. _____ Sometimes I need to bend a rule or policy in order to carry out my job
10. _____ I do things that are often accepted by one person but not accepted by others
11. _____ I have to deal with and satisfy too many different people

Appendix E

The Support for Career Development Survey

The Support for Career Development Survey

How Often:

1	2	3	4	5
Never	Seldom	Often	Almost Always	Always

How Often On a scale of 1 to 5, would you say your supervisor?

1 – 5

Statements:

1. _____ Demonstrates trust and confidence in you
2. _____ Treats you with dignity and respect
3. _____ Gives you the authority you need to do the job
4. _____ Provides you with a useful performance appraisal
5. _____ Provides you with ongoing feedback
6. _____ Jointly sets performance objectives with you
7. _____ Helps you develop career plans
8. _____ Provides adequate time for you to attend training

Appendix F

The Turnover Intentions Survey

Turnover Intentions Survey

1	2	3	4	5
Definitely Not	Not	Maybe	Yes	Definitely Yes

1 – 5
Statements:

1. _____ Do you have any thoughts of leaving your current job?
2. _____ Are you looking for a new job?
3. _____ Are you willing to accept changes in your current job?

Appendix G

Permission to Use Instruments from Publishers

Turnover Intentions Survey

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Order Date: 01/25/2012

Customer Information

Customer: Jeffrey Vizueta


Account Number: 3000490235

Organization: Jeffrey Vizueta

Retaining valued employees

Billing Status:

Charged to Credit Card

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- ISBN: 978-0-7619-1305-4
- Publication year: 2001
- Publication Type: Book
- Publisher: SAGE PUBLICATIONS
- Rightsholder: SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC BOOKS
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Support for Career Development Survey

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Role Stressors Survey

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