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Merger and Acquisitions: Effects of Cultural Adaptation on Burnout over Time among Middle Managers

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Abstract

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MBA, St. Cloud State University, 2013

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Industrial/Organizational Psychology

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Abstract

Merger and acquisition (M&A) actions are common; however, research on cultural adaptation over time leading to burnout is scarce. The purpose of this quantitative, nonexperimental study was to evaluate the relationships between independent variables defined as organizational and group adjustment, and the criterion variables operationalized as emotional exhaustion and cynicism, and to determine if the adjustment factors and time interact, affecting burnout in middle managers working in a target organization of U.S.-based M&As. The theoretical framework used was organizational socialization, conceptualized as newcomer adaptation, suggesting that individuals must traverse through an adjustment period regardless of the context of the change. Amazon Mechanical Turk was used to identify 220 research participants who were asked to respond to an online survey in SurveyMonkey that assessed organizational adjustment using the Organizational Assimilation Index – Extended Version, group adjustment using the Belongingness at Work Scale, and burnout using the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey. Correlation and regression analysis techniques were used to examine the study variables. The results indicated that organizational adjustment was negatively related to cynicism, while group adjustment was negatively related to and predicted both emotional exhaustion and cynicism. The time factor did not moderate any relationships between variables. The results point to the importance of adjustment factors and their potential relationship in reducing burnout in middle managers, thus, providing insights into early M&A integration considerations and positive social change to improve organizational performance and employee well-being.

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Dedication

I dedicate this doctoral study to my husband, Richard Stavrum. My husband is my most generous supporter and has sacrificed the most in my pursuit of this advanced education and degree. He believes in me when I do not believe in myself. He has comforted me during stressful moments or when I felt I was too tired to go on. His unconditional love for me is unparalleled and gives me purpose, and I am grateful. Thank you, Dick.

I dedicate this to my father, who never graduated from high school, let alone sought an advanced degree. He was always proud of my academic accomplishments, and although he passed on before seeing this one come about, I know that he would be proud of what I have done and achieved. I dedicate this to my grandfather. He passed before I could meet him, but I know that he was a successful businessman. Grampa believed in accepting challenges as opportunities.

Pursuing this degree has been a challenging journey in many ways, requiring intellectual, psychological, and spiritual capital every step of the way. The entire academic and dissertation experience has been filled with a great deal of work and yet, a strong sense of accomplishment. I hope that my achievement will inspire others and promote the idea that learning is a life-long adventure.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Merger and acquisition (M&A) strategies remain popular today as organizations

seek to remain competitive in the fast-paced and changing business landscape (Caiazza,

& Volpe, 2015), and yet many of them fail due to cultural adaptation, sociocultural or

human resource issues (Koi-Akrofi, 2016; Sher, 2012). Likewise, as the acquiring

business seeks to integrate the target into its culture and operations, organizational

change is required and is often accompanied by stressors affecting the employees

(Brueller, Carmeli, & Markman, 2018; Smollan, 2015a; Wagner & Garibaldi de Hilal,

2014). Furthermore, although recent research has focused on the lack of financial

performance (see Koi-Akrofi, 2016; Sher, 2012) and human resource-related issues (see

Cartwright & Cooper, 2014; Mackenzie, 2013), the effects of stress over time in these

scenarios is not well understood.

To examine this gap, I considered the stress associated with newcomer adaptation,

conceptualized as the expectation from the acquiring organization that individuals in the

target adjust to a new culture and operational requirements. Specifically, the factors of

organizational adjustment and group adjustment were evaluated. Job burnout, which is a

response to long-term stressors (Maslach & Leiter, 2017), was the foundational concept

supporting the perspective of stress in the study and the factors of emotional exhaustion

and cynicism served as criterion variables. Using longitudinal research methods, scholars

argued that significant newcomer adaptation occurs early in adjustment processes (Frögli,

Rudman, Lövgren, & Gustavsson, 2019; Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Rubenstein, &

Song, 2013) and the effects of organizational change (Smollan & Pio, 2018), stress

(Barck-Holst, Nilsonne, Hellgren, & Akerstedt, 2017; S. Hu, Creed, & Hood, 2017) and

burnout (Q. Hu, Schaufeli, & Taris, 2016; B. Kim, Kim, & Lee, 2017) change and

fluctuate over time. Therefore, the concept of time was operationalized as a moderator

variable by considering the proposed interaction with newcomer adaptation as a possible

effect on burnout. Specifically, middle managers who play pivotal roles in executing

senior leader directives through implementation tactics with lower-level associates

(Harding, Lee, & Ford, 2014; Sarala, Vaara, & Junni, 2019) were the focus of this

research.

Chapter 1 is devoted to further explaining the study by providing additional

background, which substantiates the problem statement and purpose of the study.

Although Chapter 2 offers more specific detail based on both seminal and current

research, the theoretical foundations supporting the definition of the study are briefly

introduced in Chapter 1. While the nature of the study is described and the research

questions are presented, the chapter also includes an argument for the significance of the

study. The chapter concludes with a discussion where the assumptions, scope, and

limitations are developed and is meant to further outline the study.

Background of the Study

Although 2015 and 2016 M&A activity was the highest post the 2009 global

crisis (Wright, 2016), the number of these transactions climbed to record heights again in

2017 and 2018, with more than 30,000 deals completed in those two years (Institute for

Mergers, Acquisitions and Alliances (IMAA, 2019). An M&A occurs for a number of

reasons, including increasing market share, extending product lines, or developing

product adjacencies, establishing economies of scale, or improving innovation or operations (Caiazza, & Volpe, 2015). Thus, M&A strategies are intended to build stronger organizations or improve the competitiveness of organizations (Lupina-Wegener, Drzensky, Ullrich, & van Dick, 2014), yet Sher (2012) contended that as much as 50% of M&As fail to make their deal books. Koi-Akrofi (2016) argued that failure rates are much higher, suggesting that as much as two-thirds of M&As fail to achieve desired outcomes. Researchers agree that many of these failures are because of corporate culture clashes (Mackenzie, 2013) or the role that individuals play during the change process (Koi-Akrofi, 2016). While M&A activities remain as common business strategies, cultural and sociocultural issues associated with this phenomenon and the human side of M&A actions are important dimensions to consider (Cartwright & Cooper, 2014), and this was a key point in this research study.

Park, Kim, and Yoo (2018) suggested that organizational socialization in the form of work adaptation must take place whenever a newcomer joins an organization, regardless of the situational context. Although organizational socialization is more complex and measured through six dimensions (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994), newcomer adaptation focuses only on socialization factors associated with adaptation to the organization, the group, and the job (Haueter, Macan, & Winter, 2003). Moreover, Madlock and Chory (2014) argued that when newcomers properly adjust to the organization, social connectedness in the form of person-job fit or person-organization fit emerge, with specific relationships associated with role ambiguity and work alienation. Likewise, while Livi, Theodorou, Rullo, Cinque, and Alessandri (2018)

found that successful organizational socialization of newcomers reduced interpersonal strain, research on adaptation in expatriates as newcomers suggests that individuals who are capable of assimilating into the host location are generally more productive and effective (Selmer, & Lauring, 2016).

In the context of an M&A scenario, middle managers and those who directly supervise workers in target organizations are typically expected to integrate sooner into the acquired culture in order to carry out executive directives and manage change (Sarala et al., 2019). Scholars have also indicated that this type of adaptation, through adjustments to higher workloads, role conflict, and role ambiguity, can be stressful for this population (see Kras, Rudes, & Taxman, 2017). Thus, since joiners from the target company are expected to adapt to organizational and environmental dimensions of the acquiring organization (Giessner, Horton, & Humborstad, 2016; Marks, Mirvis, & Ashkenas, 2014), further understanding of organizational socialization, and specifically newcomer adaptation could be important in M&A scenarios.

Maslach, Schaufeli, and Leiter (2001) argued that burnout is a motivational factor affecting employee performance and organizational effectiveness and is defined by dimensions of exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced professional efficacy. More specifically, Maslach et al. suggested that burnout emerges from job-person imbalances in workplace factors such as work overload, lack of control, insufficient reward, break down in community, absence of fairness, and conflicting values (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Likewise, researchers have suggested that employees involved in M&A activities have experienced higher levels of stress (Amroliwalla & Ruikar, 2015; Ribando & Evans,

2015) and, in particular, as a result organizational change (Johnson, 2016) or cultural adaptation expectations (Hajro, 2015; Sagberg, 2014).

Through longitudinal research, scholars have examined newcomer adaptation over time to evaluate how learning processes evolve and lead to either success or failure for an individual (see Frögli et al., 2019; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Likewise, researchers have studied organizational change processes over time to identify how these types of changes affect individuals in M&A scenarios (Sung et al., 2017), intensify stress for individuals (Smollan, 2015a), and how different approaches to managing organizational change lead to differentiating outcomes (Grumbach et al., 2019). Scholars have examined stress and burnout in a variety of contexts to determine how these factors change or fluctuate over time (see Barck-Holst et al., 2017; Q. Hu et al., 2016; S. Hu et al., 2017; B. Kim et al., 2017). Therefore, because of previous research and scholars suggesting that changes in organizational socialization, organizational change, stress, and burnout evolve and can fluctuate over time, I introduced elapsed time, as a moderator variable for this study, examining the relationship of newcomer adaptation over time and burnout. Thus, the rationale for this study was to further the understanding of how organizational socialization stressors, conceptualized as newcomer adaptation, might manifest as outcomes of M&A activities within the target organization, and whether over time, such stress might lead to burnout.

Problem Statement

From more of a broader perspective, the problem addressed in this study is multidimensional. While I examined burnout and newcomer adaptation over time, an

M&A scenario was considered as the contextual setting of the investigation. Furthermore, my evaluation focused on the relationships specific to burnout and newcomer adaptation over time among individuals who serve in the role of a middle manager in the target organization of an M&A scenario. Thus, to outline this more general problem, the following perspectives were provided in support of these various dimensions.

Although Koi Akrofi (2016) argued that M&A actions are a common business strategy today, they often require those in the target organization to adapt to the culture and organizational expectations of the acquiring company. Furthermore, organizational socialization theorists suggested that newcomer adaptation is required whether an individual joins an organization as a new employee or moves to a new role within the same company (Park et al., 2018). Moreover, in the context of newcomer adaptation, whereby a new joiner sojourns from an outsider to an insider member of the acquiring organization (Haueter et al., 2003), Sagberg (2014) argued that adaptation and assimilation processes can be stressful. Considering these points, scholars have not thoroughly discussed newcomer adaptation in the context of an M&A scenario, and little is known about the stressors emerging from these adaptation expectations and whether or not they relate to or could predict burnout in this setting.

Likewise, while a plethora of burnout research has been conducted in health care, and helping or service settings, only a few scholars have evaluated these perspectives as it relates to middle managers (see Dyląg, Jaworek, Karwowski, Kożusznik, & Marek, 2013; Feldt et al., 2013; Maldonado-Macías, Camacho-Alamilla, Valadez-Torres, Garcia-Alcaraz, & Limón, 2015; Valadez-Torres et al., 2017). Similarly, although employees

involved in M&A activities suggested they experience higher levels of stress (Cheng & Chang, 2016), those in middle management roles often find that roles broaden or become more demanding because of organizational changes that accompany M&A activities (McConnell, 2015). Thus, while such stressors in M&A activities often emerge from role ambiguity, work alienation (Madlock & Chory, 2014), or relationship conflicts (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016), little is known about how these issues might manifest into dimensions of job burnout within a population of middle managers working in this situational context.

With respect to the constructs outlined for this study, researchers have studied the effects of time in a variety of situational and occupational settings. For instance, scholars argued that newcomer adaption occurs early in adjustment and learning processes, and when successful, promotes productive and positive outcomes for the individual (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Furthermore, Sung et al. (2017) contended that organizational change, in particular during M&A activities, results in higher levels of fear among individuals as the change process progresses. Moreover, researchers identified that as change processes progress, both stress (Smollan & Pio, 2018) and burnout (Grumbach et al., 2019) changed and fluctuated over time in a variety of occupational and situational contexts (see Angelo & Chambel, 2015; Hansell et al., 2019; Meier, Tschudi, Meier, Dvorak, & Zeller, 2015; Pisanti et al., 2016; Q. Hu et al., 2016; Travis, Lizano, & Mor Barak, 2015). Thus, when considering the possible effects of time on newcomer adaptation in an M&A scenario and the potential ways in which this type of interaction contributes to burnout adds value to the scholarly community in a way that has not yet been evaluated.

Specific Problem Statement

Researchers have not focused specifically on how newcomer adaptation and stress converge over time to formulate burnout in M&A situations, and in particular, in middle managers within this contextual setting. Therefore, the specific problem is that the scholarly community does not know the relationships between newcomer adaptation factors and burnout in middle managers who are working the target organization involved in the M&A, or if these adjustment factors, when experienced over time, can predict burnout in this population.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this nonexperimental quantitative study was to evaluate whether newcomer adaptation, when experienced over time, is related to, or can predict job burnout in middle managers working in target organizations engaged in M&A activities. In this study, I formulated the independent variables as organizational and group adjustment and defined emotional exhaustion and cynicism as the criterion variables, which are two dimensions from the burnout construct. To determine if time moderated the relationship between newcomer adaptation and burnout, I conceptualized an intervening variable specified as the elapsed time from a merger announcement. The goal of this study was to add to the body of research on burnout through the conceptualization of stressors associated with newcomer adaptation, considering the interaction of time, among a specific population of middle managers, who are an integral, and thus, an important part of an organization (see Pärl, Koyte, & Näsi, 2016).

Research Question(s) and Hypotheses Statements

I designed this quantitative study to evaluate the effects of newcomer adaptation over time, defined as organizational adjustment and group adjustment, on the construct of burnout in middle managers in a target organization of an M&A. In this study, the argument of adaptation as a newcomer to an organization that was the target of an M&A was suggested as similar to the adaptation of a newcomer into a new organization or a new part of an organization. Therefore, my research questions focused on both the relationships between newcomer adaptation and burnout and whether newcomer adaptation factors predicted burnout in middle managers of target organizations involved in an M&A. Likewise, I introduced time into the research model, operationalized as the years and months from the merger announcement, as a moderator variable to evaluate possible interactions between newcomer adaptation and burnout. The independent variables in this study were organizational adjustment and group adjustment; criterion variables were two dimensions from the burnout construct, exhaustion and cynicism, with a moderator variable defined as the elapsed time from the M&A announcement at the target organization. Therefore, I hypothesized the following research questions.

RQ1: To what extent was newcomer organizational adjustment, as measured by the Organizational Assimilation Index, and group adjustment, as measured by Belongingness at Work Scale, related to exhaustion, as measured by the MBI-GS in middle managers in the target organization of an M&A?

$H_0$1a: There was no significant relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager exhaustion.

H_a1a: There was a significant relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager exhaustion.

$H_0$1b: There was no significant relationship between group adjustment and middle manager exhaustion.

H_a1b: There was a significant relationship between group adjustment and middle manager exhaustion.

RQ2: To what extent was newcomer organizational adjustment, as measured by the Organizational Assimilation Index, and group adjustment, as measured by Belongingness at Work Scale, related to cynicism, as measured by the MBI-GS in middle managers in the target organization of an M&A?

$H_0$2a: There was no significant relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager cynicism.

H_a2a: There was a significant relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager cynicism.

$H_0$2b: There was no significant relationship between group adjustment and middle manager cynicism.

H_a2b: There was a significant relationship between group adjustment and middle manager cynicism.

RQ3: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was organizational adjustment a significant predictor of exhaustion when controlling for group adjustment?

$H_0$3: Organizational adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion when controlling for the other variable.

H_a3: Organizational adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion when controlling for the other variable.

RQ4: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was group adjustment a significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion when controlling for organizational adjustment?

H_04: Group adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion when controlling for the other variable.

H_a4: Group adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion when controlling for the other variable.

RQ5: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was organizational adjustment a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for group adjustment?

H_05: Organizational adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

H_a5: Organizational adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

RQ6: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was group adjustment a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for organization adjustment?

H_06: Group adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

H_a6: Group adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

RQ7: Did elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

$H_0$7: Elapsed time was not a significant moderator between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion.

H_a7: Elapsed time was a significant moderator between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion.

RQ8: Did elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

$H_0$8: Elapsed time was a not significant moderator between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion.

H_a8: Elapsed time was a significant moderator between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion.

RQ9: Did elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

$H_0$9: Elapsed time was not a significant moderator between organizational adjustment and cynicism.

H_a9: Elapsed time was a significant moderator between organizational adjustment and cynicism.

RQ10: Did elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between group adjustment and cynicism in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

$H_0$10: Elapsed time was not a significant moderator between group adjustment and cynicism.

H_a10: Elapsed time was a significant moderator between group adjustment and cynicism.

Theoretical Framework

Organizational Socialization

I chose organizational socialization, conceptualized as newcomer adaptation, as the theoretical foundation for this study. In seminal research, van Maanen and Schein (1979) identified organizational socialization as a sensemaking and learning process deployed by newcomers to develop adaptation strategies collecting social knowledge and developing skills, required behaviors, and understanding organizational values required to move from an outsider to an organizational insider member. Louis (1980) argued that the situational context for such change is irrelevant, suggesting that whether an outsider is new to the organization or new to an assignment within the organization, these organizational socialization processes are necessary for the newcomer to adapt and become an insider. In this context, van Maanen and Schein (1979) developed a typology consisting of six culturally-oriented socialization processes used within organizations to teach newcomers about their roles and the organization at large. The van Maanen and Schein model, which outlines specific tactical processes used to develop newcomers'

learning and an insider's persona, is useful in conceptualizing newcomer adaptation through a cultural adaptation perspective.

In more recent research, Jones (1986) refined this model by suggesting the six socialization processes could be defined as either institutional or individual factors and conceptualized them as supporting a variety of ways newcomer adaptation takes place organizationally, through individuals within the organization assigned to the newcomer or by the newcomer themselves. More recently, Chao et al. (1994) extended the content dimensions of organizational socialization by conceptualizing specific characteristics and factors associated with newcomer adaptation. These factors explain specific learnings that take place as newcomers come to understand their roles, their coworkers, and how to successfully operate within the larger organizational context. Additionally, Haueter et al. (2003) further theorized newcomer adaptation and formulated dimensions of organizational socialization specifically focused on task, group, and organizational adaptation.

Organizational socialization theorists suggested that adjustment occurs through learning processes as a newcomer adapts to the social environment of an organization (van Maanen & Schein, 1979), while Haueter et al. (2003) argued that these learning processes can be evaluated from an organizational or group perspective. Therefore, I determined that these organizational theory concepts provided the necessary foundation for newcomer adaptation and the organizational and group dimensions of cultural adjustment as independent variables. Moreover, these concepts provided me with specific

guidance for the evaluation of M&A scenarios involving middle managers in target organizations.

Burnout

Burnout has been studied in detail since the early 1970s, when researchers qualitatively explored experiences of individuals working in caregiver and human services roles and found that emotional stressors were affecting motivation and commitment (Maslach, 2017; Maslach et al., 2001). It was during this time that thematic similarities emerged as individuals described their emotional strain and subsequent coping mechanisms (Maslach et al., 2001). In seminal research, Maslach and Jackson (1981) defined the construct of burnout as exhaustion, depersonalization or cynicism, and inefficacy, also known as reduced personal accomplishment. Maslach and Jackson argued that exhaustion is defined as a stress component and is both a physical and emotional manifestation. These researchers contended that exhaustion leads to depersonalization or cynicism, which formulates as distance or a lack of attachment to the organization or the work. Finally, according to Maslach and Jackson, this lack of attachment creates a sense of ineffectiveness in the individual, leading to inadequacy.

In early research, scholars argued that emotional exhaustion manifests first, followed by cynicism, which is used as a coping mechanism because of the feelings of exhaustion (Maslach, 1982; Maslach & Leiter, 2005). Maslach et al. (2001) suggested that emotional exhaustion and cynicism result from the work and problems with individuals in the workplace, while inefficacy results from a lack of resources. In more recent research, Gustavsson, Hallsten, and Rudman (2010) found that emotional

exhaustion manifests first, followed by cynicism. Moreover, Leiter and Maslach (2016) found that exhaustion and cynicism scores were higher than inefficacy scores, suggesting that these two factors for the study group were perceived to be more prevalent. Therefore, I considered the strength of these findings and found it was conceivable that the factors of exhaustion and cynicism could manifest sooner in an M&A scenario. Moreover, my analysis determined that it was also feasible that these burnout factors were more closely tied to work overload and potential cultural conflicts associated with cultural adaptation requirements in an M&A scenario, and thus, confirmed my decision to choose these two factors of the burnout construct for this study.

Maslach and Jackson suggested and outlined a group of situational factors such as job, occupational and organizational characteristics, and individual dimensions, which they contended, contribute to burnout. Maslach et al. (2001) introduced an extended theoretical framework discussing an individual's organizational life by suggesting there are six areas of work life, which affect an individual, such as workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values. Job burnout is not an acute phenomenon but rather manifests over time because of ongoing stressors on the job or in the workplace (Dimitrios & Konstantinos, 2014). Maslach and Jackson (1981) developed a standardized instrument known as the MBI-GS, which continues as a standard instrument used in burnout research today and formulated the methodological foundation for the criterion variables in this study.

Effect of Time

With respect to time, Bauer and Erdogan (2011) posited that critical adaptation factors for the newcomer occur within the first few weeks of entering into a new work environment. Moreover, Ganster and Rosen (2013) argued that when short-term socialization processes are hampered, stressors may emerge, and when these experiences persist and accumulate over time, this can lead to burnout (Maslach, 2017). Organizational change, which most often accompanies M&A integration activities (Koi-Akrofi, 2016), can be threatening and when evaluated over time, can emerge into a negative experience for individuals (Sung et al., 2017) and increase stress levels (Smollan & Pio, 2018). On the other hand, stress and burnout can change and fluctuate over time (Barck-Holst et al., 2017; Q. Hu et al., 2016; S. Hu et al., 2017; B. Kim et al., 2017), suggesting that understanding how newcomer adaptation and time might interact and affect burnout was a viable argument for this study.

Nature of the Study

Fundamentally, there are two approaches to research, and depending on ontological and epistemological perspectives and goals of the study, research is conducted using either a qualitative or a quantitative method. Moreover, from a worldview perspective, a researcher is confronted with how their own philosophy about the reality of truths and those truths about phenomenon are described through theory. Burkholder and Burbank (2016) argued that when pondering the use of quantitative methods, researchers must first determine if they consider social sciences similar to natural science and that the use of statistical models can adequately explain the

phenomenon. Yilmaz (2013) argued that the philosophy of quantitative research is positivism or etic research and is constructed whereby data is considered scientific and logical and is both observable and verifiable. Furthermore, J. Park and Park (2016) contended that from an ontological perspective, in quantitative research, the researcher is a positivist and a realist in the sense that objective truths are rendered through controlled scientific experiments, whereby evaluation is objective and free from values. Moreover, Slevitch (2011) posited that the epistemological orientation of quantitative research is based on the researcher measuring the phenomenon, often through surveys or specific instruments, and knowledge is developed through deriving conclusions or inferences based on the application of prescribed or structured scientific models. Likewise, Yilmaz asserted that the quantitative research intent is predictive, and the research is meant to control, confirm, and test through deduction and large sample sizes that lend to generalizability. As a result, quantitative research tends to be more direct and even simplified as variables are entered into and manipulated through prescribed models.

On the other hand, Burkholder and Burbank (2016) suggested that if researchers believe that phenomenon is best described through discovery and understanding of intentions and motivations, then interpretive methods are more useful. Yilmaz (2013) stated that the philosophy of qualitative research is constructivism or emic research and is constructed from the interpretation of experiences based on interactions in the external world. Furthermore, J. Park and Park (2016) maintained that ontologically, in qualitative research, the researcher is a relativist and argues that truth is only subjective and not specific. Moreover, Slevitch (2011) argued that the epistemological orientation in

qualitative research is based on interactions with individuals in the real world, and knowledge is developed through social interaction and exchanges between individuals in contextual and situational associations. Rubin and Rubin (2012) explained that in qualitative research, the approaches tend to be flexible, evolving, and emergent, allowing and inviting different outcomes since the collection of meaning is contextual and interpreted. In this sense, there is no wrong or right per se, just opportunities to suggest additional questions in the quest to learn more about such differences.

Philosophically, using the ontological perspective of a realist and epistemological perspectives of deriving conclusions through a controlled approach, the nature of this study was quantitative research. Creswell and Creswell (2018) suggested that common quantitative research designs include experimental and quasi-experimental, longitudinal, and nonexperimental. Experimental research attempts to establish a cause-and-effect relationship through control groups that are randomly selected and randomly assigned by manipulating the independent variable, while a quasi-experimental research design uses nonrandomized control groups and do not manipulate the independent variable (see Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012). Longitudinal designs are observational in the sense that data is collected from research participants over various time periods, allowing the researcher to evaluate outcomes at various points in time (see Caruana, Roman, Hernández-Sánchez, & Solli, 2015). Finally, while nonexperimental designs do not manipulate the independent variable or assign research participants into control groups, they are useful in understanding statistical relationships, and the strength of them, between independent

variables and criterion variables through correlation analysis, including regression analysis techniques (see Warner, 2013).

There were no control groups in the research study, thus, experimental and quasi-experimental were not appropriate research designs. Likewise, data was collected from the participants over a series of time intervals, so a longitudinal design was also not useful. However, since I sought to evaluate the relationships between independent variables, the significance of a potential interaction of a moderator variable on the independent variables and criterion variables, using a nonexperimental, correlational design approach was appropriate. Specifically, the two dimensions of burnout, exhaustion and cynicism, served as criterion variables. Newcomer adaptation, operationalized as organizational and group adjustment, served as predictor variables, along with a moderator variable operationalized as elapsed time.

Definitions

Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT): An online crowdsourcing tool used as the primary recruiting strategy for this study (Hulland & Miller, 2018).

AMT HIT: The term used in the AMT platform to define a human intelligence task, which is what workers on AMT respond to and are paid for completing (Hulland & Miller, 2018). In the context of this study, the survey questions, which included the consent form, demographic data questions, and the questions representing the survey instruments, were considered the HIT.

Burnout: The concept is defined as a chronic negative psychological and emotional state resulting from prolonged and repeated occupational stress (Maslach et al.,

2001). The conceptualization of burnout is three-dimensional, defined as emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach et al., 2001). However, based on the research associating emotional exhaustion and cynicism with the types of antecedents likely prevalent in the early stages of an M&A scenario (Maslach & Leiter, 2005) and they manifest as potentially stronger concerns for individuals (Gustavsson et al., 2010), these two factors were operationalized in this study.

Emotional exhaustion: This concept is one of the three dimensions of burnout and refers to how individuals refer to being depleted, worn out, or not having the energy to apply to their job (Maslach et al., 2001).

Cynicism: This concept is also known as depersonalization and is one of the three dimensions of burnout. This burnout factor refers to the detachment or distancing actions that individuals use as coping mechanisms to deal with exhaustion and can formulate as negative behavior, attitudes, or work withdrawal symptoms (Maslach et al., 2001).

Group adjustment: This concept is related to organizational socialization in the context of an individual adapting or adjusting to a workgroup and its particular expectations or requirements (Haueter et al., 2003).

Merger and acquisition (M&A): The two terms are often used together or interchangeably, however, they are different. A merger is the combination of two companies, whereas an acquisition is a transaction executed when one company takes over another (Koi-Akrofi, 2016).

Merger and acquisition acquiring organization: This term is used as a descriptor during a merger or acquisition as the organization that is leading the takeover or purchase of another organization (Kenton, 2018).

Merger and acquisition target: This term is used as a descriptor during a merger or acquisition as the organization that has been identified and sought after for takeover or purchase by the acquirer (Kenton, 2018).

Middle manager: This term is defined as a position within an organization that operates and serves as a liaison between the executive or senior manager level and supervisor or the individual contributors (Harding et al., 2014).

Newcomer adaptation: This concept is an organizational socialization process whereby a new joiner sojourns through an adjustment period and transforms from being an outsider to an insider member (Livi et al., 2018).

Organizational adjustment: This concept is related to organizational socialization in the context of the individual adapting to organizational expectations and requirements in the form of understanding values or goals at the entity level (Chao et al., 1994).

Organizational socialization: A process that defines how individuals collect knowledge and information about their roles, workgroups, and jobs in order to adapt to the expectations and requirements necessary to become a successful organizational member (van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Assumptions

Simon (2011) argued that research assumptions are those factors or dimensions in a study that researchers accept as true but are not specifically or formally substantiated.

The first assumption in this study was that based on the number of M&As occurring in the business climate today the representative population was available. The use of a convenience sampling technique conducted through an online survey company, such as AMT, was intended to identify the target population. I assumed that participants that accurately represented the population were able to self-select based on the demographic and operational definitions I provided in the participation invitations. To support this assumption, participants were provided with clear operational definitions, which outlined the specific role of a middle manager, the merger and acquisition target, and the desired timeline based on the merger or acquisition announcement. Once participants opted into the study, I assumed they were capable of answering the survey questions accurately, truthfully, and voluntarily. Participants received information during the recruitment phase and before the data collection process that explained the importance of the study, how the data would be ethically managed, and explaining how they could withdraw from the study. This information provided to the participants was intended to communicate to them the strength of the integrity of the study and its value.

I assumed that the use of electronic communications and survey instruments was the most effective and efficient way to both interact with participants and collect their responses. To ensure the effectiveness of such electronic tools, I provided information emphasizing the anonymity of the individual, and individuals were not asked to identify themselves within the data collection process or mechanisms. Because of my analysis of prior research that was conducted with the measurement instruments I chose for the study I assumed those instruments were both valid and reliable.

Scope and Delimitations

Simon (2011) suggested that the scope and delimitations associated with a study are those factors or dimensions that set the boundaries for the study and are controlled by the researcher. Over time, scholars have studied job burnout in a variety of occupational contexts, yet little is known about job burnout and the contextual setting of an M&A scenario. Moreover, M&A activities are common business strategies today and have been growing in numbers over the past several years (IMAA, 2019). Thus, choosing this contextual setting to study burnout was a key decision for the study.

Similarly, Harding et al. (2014) contended that middle managers play pivotal roles within organizations serving as the liaison between executive leaders who determine strategy and lower-level associates who are expected to execute it. Harding et al. suggested that because of this dual role, middle managers often find themselves in stressful situations because of feeling controlled by senior managers while at the same time dealing with resistance from lower-level contributors when implementing changes directed from above. Likewise, since M&A actions are filled with strategic decisions, which must be implemented, Smollan (2015a) argued that the resulting organizational changes create stress. Therefore, considering the role of middle managers and the stress associated with M&A activities, identifying this population working in the target organization of an M&A action was an important decision for this study.

I chose newcomer adaptation, a component of organizational socialization theory, to support the concept that when an individual moves from one organizational situation to another, the adaptation required to be successful is similar regardless of the context of the

change (see Livi et al., 2018). Therefore, I conceptualized newcomer adaptation as a premise that those in the target organization of an M&A were newcomers to the acquiring organization, and thus, were similar to those who were joining from outside the firm. Furthermore, I hypothesized that as newcomers to the acquiring organization, individuals from the target organization were, therefore, expected to adjust to the acquiring company's culture and organizational expectations. This framework was used to substantiate the independent variables of organizational and workgroup adjustment in the study, and these concepts are further discussed in the literature review.

Job burnout is a common research focus, and researchers have not only evaluated this construct in a variety of contextual settings using a multitude of predictor variables to substantiate dimensional relationships to these other factors, but they have attempted to further understand burnout in the context of job demands-resource (JD-R) and conservation of resource (COR) theories, and a job-person areas of work (AW) model (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Although I evaluated both the J-DR and COR frameworks for this study, I chose the AW model (see Maslach & Leiter, 1997) as the foundational framework for the criterion variables, in large part because it describes in more detail the specific workplace factors that substantiate the imbalances between the individual and the work. This framework is discussed in more detail within the literature review.

The factor of time in this study as a moderator variable was novel. Bauer and Erdogan (2011) argued that important newcomer adaptation processes occur early in the adjustment to a new work environment. Furthermore, if these short-term adjustment processes are not successful, stressors can emerge (Ganster & Rosen, 2013), which, when

added to the uncertainty of a new culture, workgroup, or role, can have negative effects on the newcomer (Ellis et al., 2015). Similarly, Maslach (2017) contended that burnout is a chronic condition and manifests because of accumulated stressors over time. Thus, since time is an important factor in the success of short-term newcomer adaptation processes, as well as a factor in understanding the development of burnout as a response to chronic and persistent workplace stressors, I determined that the addition of time as a moderator variable seemed a reasonable and appropriate consideration for this study.

Limitations

Simon (2011) suggested that there are limitations inherent in any study, and they represent potential weaknesses, which can be out of the researcher's control but should be disclosed as part of the study. Babbie (2017 argued that validity issues pertain to potential areas of bias or areas that could affect the generalization of the study, while ethical issues may create concerns for or affect the participants in the study. Validity and ethical issues are outlined here.

I considered various validity issues related to this study. Firstly, I utilized a convenience sampling procedure for this study as the sampling technique, which is a nonprobability sampling approach (see Babbie, 2017). Although this sampling approach is useful in finding populations that are hard or expensive to locate, the facilitation of sampling through this procedure limits the generalizability of the study (Frankfort-Nachmias, & Leon-Guerrero, 2015). AMT was used as a recruiting strategy to identify the convenience sample. Although special precautions were taken by defining specific requirements for participation, it was unclear how individuals represented themselves as

study participants. For example, although I designed the study to specifically recruit

middle managers, and I structured the AMT HIT so that only managerial workers among

the workforce were targeted, it is not known how the AMT mechanisms worked to ensure

the correct population was actually targeted. Thus, I could have unknowingly included

individuals that were not actually middle managers or included middle managers that

were not actually part of an M&A scenario.

The use of self-reporting was also a potential threat to the validity of the study.

Althubaiti (2016) explained that this type of bias could emerge in two forms as either

social desirability bias or recall bias. On the one hand, Lavrakas (2008) argued that social

desirability bias formulates when an individual over or under reports a response so that it

is perceived as more acceptable. Specifically, in this study, individuals might have either

over- or underestimated their responses on the adjustment or burnout questionnaires

based on how they felt they were adapting to the organizational or workgroup change

expectations or how stressed they felt they were because of these changes. These types of

biases may be particularly prevalent if individuals harbor frustrations with their

employers over organizational change or the pace of change (J. Kim, Song, & Lee, 2013)

and the degree of stress these changes are causing them in either their work or personal

lives (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). On the other hand, Althubaiti (2016) suggested that recall

bias emerges when a respondent must consider their response based on past events. In

this study, although burnout is a chronic syndrome and progresses over time, an

individual's responses may be driven by a particularly stressful work event that can occur

on any given day, which in turn, could stimulate feelings of being exhausted or provoke

cynical behavior (see Maslach & Leiter, 1997). Although hard to combat such bias issues, the use of standardized measurement instruments was utilitarian in addressing these biases. Additionally, I provided information on the importance and value of the research to assist the participant in understanding the significance of accurate, honest, and truthful responses. Likewise, without changing the prescribed survey questions, the format of measurement instruments was developed and delivered in such a way that the individual could not connect the question to the underlying theoretical framework. However, self-reporting limitations emerged from the data. Several participants did not respond to the question asking for their length of tenure as a manager. Therefore, the study is not generalizable to all middle managers or all M&A scenarios. Likewise, several participants did not respond to the question asking for the date the merger was announced at their organization. This might imply that respondents could not remember this date or simply chose not to provide it.

I considered that some study design elements were limitations in this study. For instance, the subscale of the instrument I used to measure workplace belongingness, conceptualized as group adjustment, only consisted of three items. Once the reliability analysis was conducted, I had to remove one of the items to improve the strength of the internal reliability of the instrument. This left only two items in the subscale for analysis, and thus, this may have weakened the group adjustment examination. Moreover, because of that weakness, those results may not be generalizable.

I concluded that some of the statistical assumptions required to accurately examine the data using linear regression methods were in possible violation of one of

more of these assumptions. For instance, I completed the normality analysis through visualizing Q-Q plots and found that age and management tenure, used as control variables, and to some extent, organizational adjustment, conceptualized as one of the independent variables, showed questionable linear relationships. Additionally, I examined the homoscedasticity assumption, visualized through the use of standardized residual plots, and found that two of the control variables, age and management tenure, when compared with both dependent variables, emotional exhaustion and cynicism, showed the possible violation of this assumption. I made the same observation regarding the homoscedasticity of the organizational adjustment variable, and emotional exhaustion and cynicism. Therefore, I determined that these statistical assumption observations could have weakened the conclusions resulting from the findings in the study.

Finally, the approach I used to define the moderating variable, conceptualized as the elapsed time from the announcement of the merger, may have weakened the examination of that variable. Although burnout manifests over time (Maslach & Leiter, 2017), a 3 year time period may have been too long to develop a meaningful relationship between the adjustment variables and the burnout factors in the study. Thus, this could be considered a weakness of the design in this study. I designed the study as a nonexperimental study, and although it was anticipated that correlational or predictive relationships would emerge, causation was not an anticipated outcome (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2015), and is a known limitation of the study.

I identified certain ethical issues and challenges that could emerge in this study. When I considered that asking middle managers survey questions about their perspectives

of newcomer adaptation and burnout, I was concerned that this might create

psychological stress for the participant, and this population might be deemed vulnerable.

In a similar context, yet different from psychological stress, I realized that the same

questions may raise concerns for research participants in terms of a conflict between

responding accurately and fears associated with economic loss or damage to their

professional reputation should their responses become known. However, the institutional

review board review conducted by Walden University did not consider these issues

substantial for this study. Notwithstanding, the invitation and the informed consent form

included information emphasizing the anonymity of the individual. Likewise, an email

address was not required to access the questionnaires, and participants were not asked to

identify themselves personally within the data collection process or mechanism. There

was no intended follow-up for this quantitative study, thus, all email addresses used for

correspondence with the participants who had questions on the AMT HIT approvals were

held separately from the data collection, and the access was managed through password-

protected files. Additionally, there were fees associated with the use of the MBI-GS

instrument, for the use of the AMT crowdsourcing platform, and for an upgraded version

of SurveyMonkey.

<div align="center">**Significance**</div>

I intended this research to provide insights into what was not known regarding the

understanding of relationships between burnout and newcomer adaptation, in association

with a factor of time, in target companies in M&A scenarios, specifically among middle

managers. M&A activity in the United States has been steadily rising since the global

financial crisis and is an important trend in the business climate today (IMAA, 2019).

Furthermore, according to Koi-Akrofi (2016), while M&As continue to grow in numbers,

many of them fail due to cultural conflicts between the two organizations. As part of the

assimilation process, target companies of acquisitions are generally required to adapt to a

new culture (Brueller et al., 2018), and although Ribando and Evans (2015) contended

that the human condition is important in aligning diverging cultures successfully, in any

given M&A scenario the associated stressors related to cultural adaptation could have a

negative effect on middle managers, leading to burnout.

Theorists of organizational socialization suggested that adjustment is required

anytime an individual enters a new working scenario, regardless of the rationale for or the

degree of the change (van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Furthermore, newcomer adaptation

has been studied in a variety of contexts where newcomers are expected to adjust from

being an outsider to an insider organizational member (Livi et al., 2018; Madlock &

Chory, 2014; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016), and this research indicated that two needs factors

align to an individual's adaptation through organizational adjustment and group

adjustment. I conceptualized newcomer adaptation (Haueter et al., 2003), which is a

formulation of organizational socialization, to support the concept that middle managers

in the M&A target organization are newcomers, similar to individuals who are joining

from the outside. Additionally, I hypothesized that these newcomers, operationalized as

the middle managers from the target organization, are also expected to adjust to the

acquiring company culture and organizational expectations. Likewise, time is an

important factor in newcomer adaptation, since critical learning processes, leading to

either successful outcomes (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013) or negative effects (Ganster & Rosen, 2013), take place early in an individual's adjustment experience (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011).

Burnout is a response to prolonged stressors in the workplace, affecting an individual's well-being (Maslach, 2017). Additionally, like stress, it has been empirically substantiated that burnout not only changes over time (K. Han, Kim, Lee, Cho, & Jung, 2019; S. Hu et al., 2017) but fluctuates as well (Garrett, Liu, & Young, 2017; Hwang, Ippolito, Beebe, Benevenia, & Berberian, 2018). Likewise, although job burnout has been studied for decades, it continues to be a significant and persistent workplace phenomenon today, affecting both individuals and organizations negatively (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Maslach and Leiter (2017) further argued that due to ongoing change not only in workplaces but also within the overall environment, the negative effects of burnout propose ramifications beyond an individual and an organization and affecting the greater society as well.

Important newcomer adaptation processes occur during the early stages of the adjustment experience (Bauer et al., 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013), and if these processes are hampered due to environmental stressors, adjustment is negatively affected (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). Furthermore, scholars have empirically substantiated that both stress and burnout change and fluctuate over time (Barck-Holst et al., 2017; Q. Hu et al., 2016; S. Hu et al., 2017; B. Kim et al., 2017). Therefore, through the addition of a factor of elapsed M&A time, I argued that insights might emerge, which could enhance the understanding of the relationships between newcomer adaptation and burnout. In

particular, because of prevalent and persistent stressors, like organizational changes

resulting from M&A activities, the intensity of burnout changes over time (Pisanti et al.,

2016), or individuals' reported perceptions of burnout experiences change over time

(Cain et al., 2017). Thus, through understanding how newcomer adaptation evolves over

time and how it drives burnout in target organizations, improved levels of organizational

socialization (Livi et al., 2018) may be developed during acquisition integration, helping

middle managers or other employees adjust as part of joining the acquiring firm

(Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Likewise, advantages could be found in improvements

for both the individual and the organization through a better work life outcome for the

employee (Adriaenssens, Hamelink, & Van Bogaert, 2017) and a more effective

acceptance of the acquiring firm's envisioned organizational culture (Kras et al., 2017).

Thus, the social change associated with this study was two-fold and benefited both the

individual and the organization.

Summary

In chapter 1, I outlined the purpose of the study, which was to examine the

relationships between newcomer adaptation, over time, and burnout in a population of

middle managers working in the situational context of a target organization in an M&A

scenario. This chapter provided insights into the problem statement, suggesting that little

is known about how newcomer adaptation, in the context of adjusting to the newly

merged organization, affects the burnout dimensions of exhaustion and cynicism, or how

time might be a factor interacting with the adjustment processes and burnout. The

theoretical framework was briefly outlined, as well as a number of foundational and

definitional elements, such as the research questions, assumptions, scope, and limitations, which are meant to further describe the research.

Chapter 2 is a detailed review of the theoretical framework used in this study, including a discussion on organizational socialization in the context of newcomer adaptation and job burnout. Additionally, current research associated with M&A and culture, including cultural adaptation frameworks, and stress in M&As is discussed, with a particular focus on how this phenomenon emerges from organizational change during the integration of the target organization into the acquirer's operation. Literature outlining the role of middle managers, and in particular, the stressors on this population during M&A activities is also provided. A lengthy discussion of recent research supporting the prevalence of job burnout in a variety of organizational and occupational settings and substantiating the relationships between the burnout construct and a multitude of work and personal variables is presented. The chapter concludes with an examination of longitudinal studies substantiating the use of time in this study, operationalized as a moderator variable, which expands the evaluation of the relationships between newcomer adaptation and burnout. Specifically, the evaluation of the longitudinal literature presented in this context centers around the effect of time associated with organizational socialization and newcomer adaptation, organizational change processes, stress, and burnout.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In Chapter 1, I introduced the study, which was focused on concerns related to burnout and organizational and group adaptation, conceptualized as newcomer adaptation, in target organizations involved in M&A scenarios. The chapter provided an outline of these concerns summarized into a specific problem statement. I outlined the research questions and hypothesis statements in Chapter 1. Moreover, I introduced organizational socialization as the theoretical framework supporting newcomer adaptation and introducing the importance of time in newcomer adaptation processes, and these concepts will be expanded on in Chapter 2. Using a population of middle managers working in M&A target organizations, the purpose of this quantitative nonexperimental study was to investigate the relationships between organizational and group adaptation factors as independent variables on the criterion variables of emotional exhaustion and cynicism, two factors from the burnout construct which are two factors (see Maslach et al., 2001), along with time operationalized as a moderator between newcomer adjustment and burnout.

In Chapter 2, I present an examination of the literature related to M&A scenarios and stressors emerging from cultural adaptation and organizational change, resulting from those activities, as well as theoretical contemplation regarding newcomer adaptation, the effect of time on those processes, and burnout, which was the purpose of this study. I discuss and provide a detailed theoretical analysis explaining the development of organizational socialization and burnout theories. A specific analysis is

provided concerning how M&A factors affect middle managers' roles and create

stressors for these individuals working in target organizations. I present an evaluation of

recent research, examining various occupational and organizational settings, using a

multitude of variables in support of relationships to emotional exhaustion and cynicism,

operationalized in this study as burnout. The chapter concludes with a detailed discussion

of the importance of time when associated with newcomer adaptation, how perceptions of

organizational change, stress, and burnout change over time, and how time influences the

intensity of burnout in individuals.

I began the literature review with a discussion on M&A research, including the

effect of culture on M&A activities, how cultural adaptation affects M&A outcomes, and

stress stemming from M&A activities. Accordingly, this examination included specific

discussions of recent research related to organizational change and those effects, as well

as stressors felt by middle managers in M&A situations. I explored newcomer adaptation

from a theoretical organizational socialization perspective. Recent research supported

specific dimensions of newcomer adaptation from an outsider's perspective of joining a

new organization, posited as similar to that of the target organization unifying with the

acquiring organization in an M&A scenario. Burnout was discussed from a theoretical

perspective, with specific burnout factors outlined. The chapter outlined recent research,

where scholars have substantiated connections between organizational change and

burnout, as well as linkages between burnout and middle managers, burnout and culture,

and the process of burnout over time. The chapter concluded with an examination of the

effect of time on organizational socialization processes, newcomer adaptation, organizational change processes, stress, and burnout.

Literature Search Strategy

I developed the search strategy using Walden University Library databases, including PsycINFO, PsycARTICLES, MEDLINE with full text, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, SocINDEX with Full Text, as well as in a Thoreau multidatabase search. Google Scholar was also useful in finding articles that could be cross-referenced with Walden University Library resources to ensure a peer-reviewed status. With the exception of seminal research or articles, which helped substantiate a construct or argument, research articles were considered current if published in scholarly journals within the previous 5 years. Likewise, the reference lists I found in these current studies were useful resources to further identify additional recent or relevant literature.

The keywords used in Walden University Library searches included *merger and acquisition, M&A, burnout, job burnout, occupational stress, job demands, workload, role conflict, role ambiguity, belongingness, fairness, organizational values, reward, reward imbalance, uncertainty, cultural adaptation, middle managers, white-collar managers, organizational socialization, work adaptation,* and *newcomer adaptation.* I conducted further research to locate longitudinal studies aimed at understanding the importance of time relative to organizational socialization processes and newcomer adaptation. Likewise, the analysis of longitudinal research also examined the effects of time on organizational change processes, how stress and burnout change and fluctuate over time, and how individuals' perceptions of burnout change over time.

Theoretical Framework

Organizational Socialization

I used organizational socialization, with specific attention focused on newcomer adaptation, as the theoretical foundation for this study. van Maanen and Schein (1979) theorized that organizational socialization is an adjustment and learning process explaining how newcomers determine adaptation strategies through understanding the social knowledge, skills and abilities, required behaviors, and organizational values necessary to move from an outsider to an organizational insider member, regardless of the situational context of the change. In other words, whether an outsider is new to the organization or new to an assignment within the organization, organizational socialization is necessary for the newcomer to adapt and become an insider (see Louis, 1980).

Njegovan, Vukadinović, and Dudak (2017) pointed out that the process of becoming an insider suggests that the individual must gather enough relevant knowledge and skills about the organization, workgroup, and the job, to transform themselves into meaningful contributors. In doing so, the individual becomes successful, and the organization remains relevant and competitive, and thus, newcomer adaptation is important for both the individual and the organization (Njegovan et al., 2017). In this context, van Maanen and Schein developed a typology consisting of six culturally oriented socialization approaches used to teach newcomers about the role and the organization. The model, which outlines specific tactical processes used to formulate newcomer adaptation, includes purposeful relationships between individual versus

collective, formal versus informal, sequential versus random, fixed versus variable, serial versus disjunctive, and investiture versus divestiture approaches (van Maanen & Schein, 1979). These processes are useful in conceptualizing newcomer adaptation from a cultural adaptation perspective (van Maanen & Schein, 1979).

Jones (1986) further synthesized the van Maanen and Schein model by suggesting the six socialization approaches could be defined based on either institutional or individual factors and conceptualized them as supporting contextual, information content, and social perspectives of newcomer adaptation. Jones argued that the van Maanen and Schein socialization tactics that are collective (defined as formal and driven by the institution) and individualized (defined as informal and driven by specific individuals) are contextual in nature, meaning that organizations deliver information to newcomers through different types of mechanisms. Collective and formal tactics provide institutional continuity, whereby individual and informal mechanisms provide nuanced experiences and allow for interpretive understanding, often enhancing the creativity of the newcomer (Jones, 1986). Jones suggested that institutional tactics, which are sequential and fixed, and individualized tactics that are random and variable describe the content of information provided to newcomers. On the one hand, sequential and fixed tactics are meant to develop discipline, define processes, and elicit a sense of organization to the learning and assimilation activities. On the other hand, random and variable tactics provide little guidance to the newcomer, often increasing uncertainty or confusion regarding expectations (Jones, 1986). Finally, Jones contended that serial and investiture institutionalized tactics and disjunctive and divestiture individualized tactics represent the

social aspects of organizational socialization. In this case, institutionalized tactics proactively provide the newcomer with resources such as experienced coworkers who serve as role models and invest in and support the newcomer through their initial learning experiences. When social tactics are individualized and disjunctive, the newcomer must develop and adapt independently, without or with minimal help or feedback from organizational insiders (see Jones, 1986). This conceptualization of newcomer adaptation was useful in understanding how newcomers can become stressed because of how organizations approach delivering information, the degree of order in how information is distributed, and the type or availability of insider resources provided to the outsider during that adaptation phase.

From a different perspective, Louis (1980) identified key themes associated with organizational socialization, including characteristics of organizational socialization, socialization stages, and effects of socialization on individuals. For instance, when describing the characteristics of organizational socialization, Louis suggested that the process is a life-long consideration as individuals move from organization to organization or from role to role. With each change, the newcomer must start over and find a way to adapt to the new expectations associated with the role or organization, and these adaptation characteristics may be culturally, behaviorally, or socially constructed (see Saks & Ashforth, 1997).

Likewise, Louis (1980) outlined the stages of organizational socialization beginning with the first stage occurring before the newcomer joins the organization, whereby they formulate expectations in anticipation of joining the organization or

starting the job (see Feldman, 1976). When an individual starts the new role or enters the organization, this phase is known as the encounter phase (see Louis, 1980) or the accommodation phase when the newcomer meets coworkers and starts developing relationships, comes to understand the organization, and learns the specifics of the job in more granular detail (see Feldman, 1976). The final socialization phase is known as the adaptation (see Louis, 1980) or the role management phase whereby the individual is capable of knowing how to resolve conflicts, handling the demands of the job, and navigating the organization's cultural landscape effectively (Feldman, 1976; Yozgat & Güngörmez, 2015). It is during this final phase that the newcomer successfully transitions from an outsider to an insider (Yozgat & Güngörmez, 2015).

The effects of organizational socialization appear in what Saks and Ashforth (1997) argued are proximal and distal outcomes, meaning that the individual adapts successfully to the job in more than one way. Likewise, individuals also must adapt as a member of the organization and their workgroup through adopting the status quo, altering role execution through innovative ways to complete tasks, or making changes to the job itself (see Louis, 1980). These additional perspectives were useful in appreciating that newcomer adaptation is a multidimensional construct, including concepts of time and effect on the adaptation process.

Through additional research, Chao et al. (1994) substantiated content dimensions of organizational socialization, including adaptation factors associated with performance proficiency, people, politics, language, history, and organizational goals and values. These dimensions are a more granular view of adaptation processes. For instance, a

performance proficiency dimension ties directly on how well socialization and adaptation tactics facilitate learning the job, while Chao et al. argued the people dimension represents the successful development of relationships within the organization. Chao et al. defined a political dimension as the development of a power structure and using it to successfully navigate the organization's cultural and politically-motivated landscape. Chao et al. suggested that the language and history dimensions of adaptation are a more granular perspective of culture in that they refer to how newcomers learn jargon or acronyms as communication tools and the myths and customs of the organization that help them determine appropriate behaviors or approaches toward interactions. Finally, Chao et al. argued that organizational goals and values help the newcomer align with the organization's greater mission and are associated with how the newcomer adapts to becoming a good overall corporate citizen beyond specific job or workgroup expectations. Such granular specifics associated with newcomer adaptation added to understanding the complexity of these socialization activities and informed this study in relating these dimensions to newcomer adaptation in an M&A scenario as outsiders in the target organization are asked to assimilate or integrate into the acquirer's organization and culture.

Haueter et al. (2003) further conceptualized newcomer adaptation and formulated dimensions of organizational socialization specifically focused on task, group, and organizational adaptation. These concepts offer a more situational perspective to newcomer adaptation by segmenting successful adaptation into specific organizational components. Furthermore, while the concepts of organizational, workgroup, and job or

task adaptation are represented in the various theoretical perspectives grounded in content, context, and social adaptation approaches (see Jones, 1986; Louis, 1980; van Maanen & Schein, 1979), Haueter et al. recognized an overlap and found that conceptualizing adaptation based on specific domain components provided new insights into the challenges of newcomer adaptation. In other words, the domain perspective provides a viewpoint into how newcomers apply and become successful with the various content, context, and social adaptation scenarios within the specific boundaries of the situational domain (see Haueter et al., 2003). Moreover, when applied to organizational socialization theory, these refinements offered guidance specific to newcomer adaptation and the multiple dimensions of cultural adjustment as independent variables, thus allowing for insights required in M&A scenarios involving middle managers in target organizations.

Burnout

In a 2017 study, half of American workers reported they were either experiencing or expected to experience organizational changes, which in turn created lower levels of engagement and affected job satisfaction and organizational trust for them (American Psychological Association (APA, 2017). Moreover, in the same study, 55% of those who had recently or were currently involved in such changes also reported they were experiencing chronic work stress in the form of cynicism. In comparison, 34% suggested they were dealing with health issues, and 39% stated they were experiencing work life conflicts (APA, 2017). Additionally, job burnout and other types of employee stressors in organizations are costly to businesses, with some estimates suggesting they can be as

high as $300 billion annually in the United States (Kenworthy, Fay, Frame, & Petree, 2014). On the other hand, Maslach and Leiter (2017) contended that due to the various complexities and interdependencies associated with job burnout, this phenomenon affects individuals, organizations, and society at large in ways that may not be easily understood. For instance, because of the ongoing dynamics of change in the environment through globalization and technology, at individual, organizational, and societal levels, intricate interconnections go beyond the workplace and work life, affecting an individual's well-being through altering lifestyles and sociological ideologies rapidly, continuously and substantially (Maslach & Leiter, 2017).

Job burnout theory. Maslach and Leiter (2017) contended that while job burnout has been studied for decades, it continues to be a significant organizational phenomenon negatively affecting countless individuals and their well-being in workplaces today. Studies focused on job burnout began nearly four decades ago in caregiving, service, and helping industries, primarily in the United States (Maslach, 1982). However, through more recent research, authors have studied and identified burnout in a plethora of other occupations and industries (see Fiorilli, De Stasio, Di Chiacchio, Pepe, & Salmela-Aro, 2017; Lawrence, Loi, & Gudex, 2019; May, Seibert, Sanchez-Gonzalez, & Fincham, 2018; Mojsa-Kaja, Golonka, & Marek, 2015; Yan, Lin, Su, & Liu, 2018) and across a multitude of locations across the globe (see Brom, Buruck, Horváth, Richter, & Leiter, 2015; Guan et al., 2017; Jin, Zhang, & Wang, 2015; Kubayi, 2018; Phillips-Hall & Galbraith, 2019; Yu, Wang, Zhai, Dai, & Yang, 2015). Scholars debated that on a

continuum, job burnout on one end contrasts with employee engagement on the other and is a process based on the social environment of the workplace (Maslach & Leiter, 2017).

The job burnout construct is described based on three specific dimensions know as exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced personal efficacy, or lack of accomplishment (Maslach & Leiter, 2017), and emerges as a chronic dysfunction because of prolonged stressors in workplaces today. Emotional exhaustion is a stressor characterized by individuals feeling overwhelmed, manifesting as emotionally and physically extended, and lacking energy (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Maslach et al. (2001) argued that as a process, exhaustion leads to cynicism, which is a form of detachment used as a coping strategy by individuals to provide them with distance from the work and the organization. Maslach and Leiter (2017) posited that through depersonalization, a protection mechanism emerges whereby individuals attempt to distance themselves emotionally from the sensation of exhaustion and their perceived dissatisfaction or disappointment with the organization, as well as the work itself.

Maslach and Leiter (2017) argued that as the process of job burnout progresses and persists, exhaustion and depersonalization lead to a sense of lack of accomplishment or reduced personal efficacy. Maslach and Leiter contended that as individuals disassociate themselves from the work and the overall organization, they often realize that they may not be as effective in their role as they once were. Furthermore, Maslach and Leiter suggested that this feeling of inefficacy cannot only affect an individual's confidence in themselves but can create a spiraling effect over time. They suggested that as the sense of a lack of accomplishment intensifies, not only does the individual's

perception of himself or herself change, but their perception of how others view their capabilities also changes, further eroding their self-confidence.

While the three factors of burnout remain relevant for researchers, arguments regarding the progression of burnout factors have been discussed for decades with varying perspectives. For instance, in early research, Maslach (1982) argued that exhaustion occurred first, with cynicism following quickly as a coping mechanism. This perspective was further substantiated by Maslach and Leiter (2005) in a later study. On the other hand, other authors contended that burnout manifests in different sequences, with emotional exhaustion manifesting first, followed quickly by reduced efficacy and finally cynicism, or cynicism formulates first, followed by inefficacy, with the emotional exhaustion factor trailing last (Beehr, 2007). In more recent research, Gustavsson et al. (2010) found that emotional exhaustion manifests first, followed by cynicism. Furthermore, de Vos et al. (2016) found that burnout develops early in some nursing careers, manifests as emotional exhaustion and cynicism, and intensifies as time goes on. Likewise, de Vos et al. found that reduced efficacy did not manifest to the same extent. Moreover, Leiter and Maslach (2016) found that exhaustion and cynicism scores were higher than reduced efficacy scores, suggesting that these two factors for the study group were perceived to be more prevalent.

Maslach et al. (2001) pointed out that emotional exhaustion and cynicism result from the work and problems with individuals in the workplace, while inefficacy results from a lack of resources. Therefore, when considering these findings, it is conceivable that the factors of exhaustion and cynicism could manifest sooner in an M&A scenario

and formulate in a specific sequence among individuals in this contextual setting. In other words, as exhaustion intensifies, so too will cynicism as a coping mechanism. Additionally, since these factors are more closely tied to work overload and potential cultural conflicts associated with cultural adaptation requirements in an M&A scenario, they were also of paramount interest in this study. Thus, emotional exhaustion and cynicism, two of the three factors of the burnout construct, were chosen for this research.

Theorists have described job burnout as a concerning organizational phenomenon and researchers have investigated the construct from a variety of contextual and situational perspectives. Over time, scholars have tried to understand the causes of burnout and the effect of the phenomenon on both individuals and organizations. The specific causes of burnout are outlined here.

Job burnout causes. Maslach and Leiter (2017) outlined six interrelated situational factors as causes of job burnout and contended that incongruences or mismatches between an individual and the work or organization, either singularly or together, converge to formulate the burnout dimensions in individuals. Furthermore, Maslach and Leiter contended that these mismatches are usually out of the individual's control, and thus, they emerge as environmental factors. Therefore, while the responses to these burnout aspects can be considered individually-centric, the factors themselves that formulate burnout are organizationally-centric (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). These factors outlined by Maslach and Leiter include workload, control, reward, community, fairness, and values, and each one will be discussed separately.

Workload and additional demands. In burnout theory, work overload is observed as either an unmanageable increase in workload, to the point where the individual feels they are never able to catch up, where work demands supersede resources, or when individuals perceive that tasks are not aligned with their perceived skill sets or personal preferences (see Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Specifically, the conceptualization of increased job demands coupled with decreased job resources has been linked to burnout (Baeriswyl, Krause, Elfering, & Berset, 2017). For instance, researchers found that when compared to teaching tasks, the additional demands of and expectations associated with non-teaching tasks increased burnout among high school teachers (Lawrence et al., 2019). Conversely, research also found that when job resources, characterized as self-efficacy and social support, are perceived to be high, job burnout is lessoned (S. Kim & Wang, 2018).

Additionally, downsizing and reorganizations have increased workload demands on individuals who remain after these actions (Boyd, Tuckey, & Winefield, 2014; Cotter & Fouad, 2013) and making work more complicated and intense in organizations today. Likewise, these types of mismatches between perceived available resources and work demands can spill over into an individual's personal life, often adding to what can already be a delicate balance between professional obligations, personal responsibilities, and the pace of life, intensifying these stressors on a continual basis (G. Wu, Wu, Li, & Dan, 2018). Moreover, the expansion of work roles often requires that individuals not only must do more of the same work, but they must also perform different tasks, leading to burnout (Semmer et al., 2015) and negatively affecting mental health (Madsen,

Tripathi, Borritz, & Rugulies, 2014). Similarly, Bilal and Ahmed (2017) found that when work rules are highly formalized, characterized as rigid, or bureaucratic and demanding, this organizational factor can also lead to burnout over time. This research related to workload as a cause of burnout supports the perspective that increased workload, perceived as increased demands on individuals, emerges in various situational and contextual dimensions.

 Lack of control. Maslach et al. (2001) described the second factor associated with burnout, which is closely related to the emotional exhaustion and inefficacy dimensions, is the perceived lack of control one has with the work and the work environment (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Albrecht (2015) suggested that when an individual perceives a convergence between too many demands and too few resources, such as the degree of responsibility for work accomplishments or the sheer volume of work, and the perception of limited authority or ability to alter the work or environmental conditions, a sense of lack of control emerges. For instance, Bilal and Ahmed (2017) argued that when employees can participate in decision-making and communication processes, these types of organizational structures serve to reduce the sense of loss of control.

 Maslach and Leiter (2017) posited that role conflict and role ambiguity, manifesting from unclear instructions or multiple individuals providing direction, is also associated with a lack of control. Furthermore, Y. Han, Wang, and Dong (2014) found that role conflict leads to higher work anxiety, especially in middle managers who do not have proactive personality traits. Recently, Xu (2019) argued that role conflict among Chinese university teachers related to both emotional exhaustion and cynicism, while

Yildirim and Dinc (2019) found that both role ambiguity and role conflict were related to burnout in Flemish school principals. Thus, this recent research connecting role conflict and role ambiguity to burnout, coupled with the relationships between workload and burnout, provide support for considering how these job and organizational characteristics contribute to burnout among individuals.

Rewards. Rewards, described as a deficiency in extrinsic, intrinsic, and social rewards, is considered the third cause of burnout and is closely tied to feelings of inefficacy (Maslach et al., 2001), with an effort-reward imbalance related to emotional exhaustion (Rasmussen et al., 2016). From an extrinsic reward perspective, Maslach and Leiter (2017) suggested that the feeling of inefficacy can manifest when individuals feel there is inequity between financial rewards received and their perceived work outputs or professional achievements. Likewise, Maslach (2017) pointed out that in workplaces today, there is often a lack of expressed value or appreciation for job-related contributions from employees, especially when downsizing or restructuring activities require greater work expectations from individuals. Maslach argued that this lack of recognition devalues the work and the worker, affecting the social aspect of work and one's sense of accomplishment, thus, taking the joy out of work. The points conveyed by these researchers supports the perspective that the lack of reward or reward imbalances are important factors in understanding the burnout phenomenon.

Loss of community. Maslach et al. (2001) considered the loss of community, positive personal connections, and fragmented relationships in the workplace as the fourth cause of burnout. From a fundamental perspective, Maslow (1943) described

human beings as social creatures, suggesting that an individual's desire for a sense of belonging and to develop positive social relationships with others is part of their intrinsic needs structure. Moreover, personal experiences at work not only connect an individual to the workplace and coworkers but assist in establishing an individual's personal identity (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016), and when organizational change disrupts an individual's personal or professional identity, it is stressful (Grenier & Bidgoli, 2015). Job security and stressors emerging from organizational change often threaten an individual's sense of community and fragment personal relationships as coworkers leave or teams are fractured (see Maslach et al., 2001). Similarly, globalization and technology, which have created virtual teams and remote working situations where workers are isolated with little personal interaction, have changed the formulation of belongingness, the sense of community, and social structures within the workplace and among people (Allen, Golden, & Shockley, 2015). On the other hand, when social relationships at work are strong and of high quality, a protective barrier develops, and burnout is lessoned (Coissard, Ndao, Gilibert, & Banovic, 2017). Therefore, scholars agreed that social relationships at work are part of an individual's needs structure and support their well-being, and when these structures are attenuated or absent, these issues can contribute to burnout.

Fairness. Maslach et al. (2001) contended that the fifth employee-employer incongruence causing burnout is fairness. Maslach et al. argue that fairness is present when the elements of trust, openness, and respect between the individual and the organization exist, and when absent is related to emotional exhaustion and cynicism. Maslach et al. suggested that as workloads increase and employees are asked to do more

work or take on additional responsibilities with no more or fewer resources, including

rewards, they may consider the workplace as an unfair environment. Moreover, when

organizational justice in the form of procedural justice, or the organizational approach to

making changes, is seen as incongruent with employees' perceptions of fairness, this

perspective increased burnout (Roczniewska, Retowski, & Higgins, 2018). For instance,

Maslach et al. claimed that employees view unfairness when they perceive

mismanagement of performance evaluations or promotions, or if they observe or

expected to participate in cheating or otherwise unethical behavior in the organization,

and research has shown that these types of organizational justice perspectives were

related to both exhaustion and cynicism (Jin et al., 2015).

Values. Maslach et al. (2001) argued that a conflict in values between the

organization and the individual is considered the sixth and final mismatch leading to

burnout. Brom et al. (2015) substantiated the relationship between values and burnout,

suggesting that when employee and organizational values are in alignment, burnout is

reduced, and well-being is higher (Veage et al., 2014). Conversely, when there is a

divergent fit between the individual and the organization, this factor predicted higher role

conflict, leading to greater exhaustion (Tong, Wang, & Peng, 2015). Likewise, Maslach

and Leiter (2017) contended that a values contradiction between the individual and

organization can lead to exhaustion and cynicism. For instance, when a divergence occurs

between organizational mission statements professing high quality and customer

satisfaction and operational approaches constrained by short-term financial goals or cost-

cutting measures, it can leave workers, who are expected to uphold the firm's brand and

reputation in the marketplace, confused and even frustrated (see Maslach & Leiter, 2017).

Likewise, a malalignment between personal and organizational values may also occur

should pressure to do a job lead to cheating or the application of unethical approaches.

Maslach (2017) summarized the tension between values conflicts by stating, "Workers

find themselves making a trade-off between the work they want to do and work they have

to do" (p. 150). The information outlined in support of the causes of burnout illustrates

both the complexities and the overlap associated with various situational factors that

create stress for employees in organizations today. Moreover, current burnout theory,

with the refinements associated with current research supporting additional occupational

contexts and situational dimensions, offered me guidance for the criterion variables,

operationalized in this study as emotional exhaustion and cynicism.

<div align="center">**Literature Review Related to Key Concepts**</div>

M&A and Culture

Having an overall understanding of organizational culture and how this issue

relates to the human factor in M&A activities is important. From a macro perspective,

Ibidunni and Agboola (2013) argued that the effects of organizational culture on

performance are multidimensional and suggested these factors can be personalized,

socially-oriented, and tactile. For instance, Ibidunni and Agboola argued that

organizational culture influences individuals based on how they perceive their values

align with those of the organization. Individuals also seek to belong to the social network

of the organization through their interactions with others. For example, individuals will

seek to identify with or relate to role models they find within their immediate workgroup or within the greater social context of the organization (Ibidunni & Agboola, 2013).

Organizational culture also supports observable and tactile factors such as rituals or artifacts that individuals observe, find meaningful, and assist the individual in formulating connections to the organizational environment (Robinson & Baum, 2019). Thus, organizational culture is fundamental in establishing an identity for the organization that employees can relate to and align with in order to become a group member (Cornelissen, Haslam, & Balmer, 2007). Likewise, changing culture is seen as a complex, challenging and time-consuming undertaking (see Ibidunni & Agboola, 2013), especially when the cultures between firms are significantly different (see Magano & Thomas, 2017). In early research, Cartwright and Cooper (1993) suggested that when disruptions in the normalcy of culture are perceived by individuals, cultural change is considered as a threat. However, more recently, Graebner, Heimeriks, Huy, and Vaara (2017) discussed those threats as relating to trust, justice, and organizational and individual identities.

Cultural adaptation frameworks. Based on these perspectives, cultural adaptation and assimilation in M&A scenarios have been discussed for decades. Buono, Bowditch, and Lewis (1985) proposed that divergent cultures formulate from either subjective or objective cultural differences between the target and the acquiring company. On the one hand, subjective cultural dimensions represent those perceptions that individuals in the organization develop based on shared values and beliefs about the organization and its environment. These types of cultural dimensions tend to assist in

creating norms and supporting accepted behaviors in the organization. On the other hand, objective cultural factors are those observable and tangible features, which emerge as materialistic symbols of the organization. Examples of these cultural dimensions might be a dress code, office assignments, or parking rules. For instance, Buono et al. qualitatively compared two companies in the same industry that had very different subjective and objective cultures and found tensions and problematic issues associated with both pre-and post-merger activities.

More recently, Marks and Mirvis (2011) discussed versions of acculturation models often chosen when making decisions about M&A integration scenarios and suggested there are four cultural end states which generate changes for either the target or the acquiring firm. While cultural assimilation is achieved, whereby the target adopts or conforms to the acquirer's culture or vice versa, cultural integration means that parts of both cultures are adopted to create a new culture. Finally, cultural transformation formulates when both companies find synergies by developing an entirely new way of doing business and abandoning the current cultural state. Y. Kim (2015) argued that acculturation and deculturation must occur for change to manifest in individuals; however, Kim also pointed out that this scenario causes stress in the form of uncertainty, confusion, or anxiety for the individual as they work through the inevitability of this disequilibrium.

In addition to organizational identity issues during M&As, individuals must also transform their work identities in order to adapt to the merged organization (Giessner et al., 2016). Thus, social identity theory is helpful in understanding how employees in the

two different organizations view cultural differences and the effect of changes on their work identities. Tajfel and Turner (2001) suggested that a social identity emerges when individuals define themselves based on group membership and derive positive self-esteem by comparing themselves to others from different outgroups. Likewise, as an individual seeks to maintain this positive conception, from a group perspective, this characterization formulates into an "us versus them" (Privman, Hiltz, & Wang, 2013, p. 33) persona based on one's ingroup. Thus, in M&A scenarios, individuals make comparisons based on the "us" versus "them" bias, which can formulate into a threat when the comparison is perceived to be significantly different between groups within either the target or acquiring organization (see Marks & Mirvis, 2011). On the one hand, Buick, Carey, and Pescud (2018) found that nature and pace of work, valuing people, workforce characterizations, and communication styles illustrate the types of cultural differences that individuals use to compare and contrast their ingroup to the acquiring outgroup, resulting in conflicts described as hostility, tension, frustration, and negative stereotypes. On the other hand, and in support of social identity theory, Yildiz (2016) discovered that when in-and out-groups are similar between the target and the acquiring organization, benevolent-based trust was higher, but these similarities had no effect on competence-based trust.

Koi-Akrofi (2016) argued that cultural adaptation is an important perspective in the successful integration of two companies engaged in an M&A scenario. Thus, understanding the conceptualization of cultural adaptation, the varying types of organizational cultures, and adaptation perspectives from an individual's point of view

are helpful when examining cultural adaptation in an M&A scenario. Furthermore, researchers have provided a useful foundation and contextual setting regarding culture and cultural adaptation in M&As. Therefore, these conceptualizations are useful in helping to understand the degree of change required within the target or acquiring organizations, and thus, establish a basis for further discussion with respect to the potential stressors associated with this type of organizational change.

Cultural effects in M&As. Using the established ideas about cultural integration and the different types of organizational cultures, studies have emerged discussing how culture can affect the success of M&A activities. Koi-Akrofi (2016) pointed to human resource integration problems associated with divergent organizational cultures and cultural differences between the target and the acquiring company and the lack of sensitivity toward these issues as responsible for as much as two-thirds of those M&As that fail to achieve expected outcomes. In a longitudinal qualitative study, van Marrewijk (2016) suggested that employees create subcultures and these play important roles in influencing the dynamics of cultural adaptation and integration in M&A activities, adding to the complexity of these processes, and contributing to a slow evolution toward the eventual outcome of the integration scenario and post-merger conclusion. Sarala et al. (2019) supported this perspective and suggested that since middle managers are closest to the employees, they are key in M&A integration activities as facilitators in understanding the cultural dynamics that manifest through this type of employee sense-making.

In addition to financial and performance evaluations, scholars have examined the human factor associated with the integration of two organizations and how employees

relate to M&A activities. Mackenzie (2013) discussed the human element and

organizational culture and how these factors affect trust between employees and leaders

and creates fear among employees during M&A activities. Often these types of human-

oriented issues are underestimated by business leaders when planning and initiating

M&A activities (see Mackenzie, 2013), and Gunkel, Schlaegel, Rossteutscher, and Wolff

(2015) argued that during an M&A, the cultural environment could play an important role

in negative employee emotional responses and dysfunctional behaviors. For instance,

Bansal (2016) found that cultural incongruence in M&A scenarios was a significant

predictor in leading to a loss of trust among employees and negatively affecting their self-

confidence. Ismail, Baki, Omar, and Bebenroth (2016) found that incongruences between

culture and an individual's perception of organizational identity can exist in M&A

scenarios, which exacerbates an individual's ability to feel part of or belong to the

merged organization (Cho, Lee, & Kim, 2014). Furthermore, a longitudinal study found

that if employees from the target organization could not relate to the acquiring

organization, they were not able to perceive how to achieve the goals set forth through

M&A activities (Lupina-Wegener et al., 2014). In a different longitudinal qualitative

study, Hajro (2015) found that interpersonal conflicts in M&As, because of cross-cultural

interactions and differences in organizational culture, could lead to stress and perceived

stress for individuals. Furthermore, Hajro claimed that these factors negatively affected

both individual and organizational trust dimensions and increased resistance among those

involved in M&A activities. Based on this research, how employees perceive the effect of

M&A activities and how individuals in the organizations involved in M&A activities internalize these perspectives is an important consideration when studying M&As.

Scholars have also recently focused on managers' perspectives of M&A activities. McConnell (2015) outlined how managers' roles change and broaden during M&A activities and how those changes affect a manager's effectiveness, requiring the rethinking of managerial paradigms of success. Additionally, Shi, Liu, Yang, Yao, and Liu (2017) pointed out how M&A cultural differences can reduce managers' commitment and intensify social-cultural integration issues. Conversely, in the same study, when managers of the target organization identified with a positive organizational culture within the acquiring organization, they perceived higher levels of respect existed in the organization and among peers, and they felt more valuable (Shi et al., 2017). Furthermore, Edwards, Lipponen, Edwards, and Hakonen (2017) found that over time, justice, and perceived threats were linked to acquiring organizational identities for employees of target organizations, and thus, affected social bonding and adaptation success during and after M&A integration activities. These studies provide a useful foundation for discussing the effect of cultural differences, cultural adaptation concerns, and the perceptions of those who are involved in M&A activities, including middle managers of target organizations.

Stress in M&As

In recent decades, researchers have focused on M&A activities and how they manifest into stressful situations for individuals, especially for those in the target organization. As early as the 1990s, Cartwright and Cooper (1993) discussed how M&A

integration activities resulted in increased stress from work overload and long work hours, leading to higher levels of maladaptive coping strategies and adverse mental health scores among managers affected by the changes. Although this research is decades old, several more recent studies expand this discussion. For instance, scholars have examined the effects of stressors associated with organizational changes that occur in either company because of M&A transitionary activities. In particular, these stressors have been evaluated from a variety of contexts and situational perspectives. Moreover, researchers have focused on groups of middle managers, working in either a target or an acquiring organization, and evaluated their roles and the effect of stress on these individuals. Specifically, when investigating stress related to this role, scholars have considered environmental characteristics, role-specific factors, and the stress associated with the pivotal role middle managers play in an organization supporting and executing M&A organizational changes.

Effects of organizational change. Researchers suggest that M&A scenarios create organizational change that can affect the employees working within either of the organizations involved in the M&A. Firstly, employees can feel threatened by the proposition of their unknown future state and may perceive themselves to be worse off in the new situation (Brueller et al., 2018; Wagner & Garibaldi de Hilal, 2014). For instance, employees in developed countries, like the United States, often view M&A activities as threats to perceived growth opportunities and other employee work outcomes such as work life balance and job satisfaction (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2017). Likewise, recent M&A research indicated that excessive organizational change in the

form of frequency, effect, and extent significantly increased overall uncertainty for affected employees (Johnson, 2016). Smollan (2015b) argued that such change generates stress and anxiety over perceived losses, subsequently developing into fear associated with the subsequent endings and uncertainty regarding expectations of adapting to something new (Grace, 2016).

Recently researchers have provided additional context to how change during M&As can create stressors for employees. Specifically, Bansal (2015) found a variety of negative emotions emerge during M&A integration activities causing employees to feel confused, angry, frustrated, worried, and tense, and these feelings contributed to misunderstandings and distrust. From the employee's perspective, M&A activities, including business integration actions, result in organizational changes that often lead to negative outcomes such as layoffs, restructures, or uncertain career paths leading to fear, insecurity, and a lack of trust (Ghosh & Dutta, 2016; Mackenzie, 2013; McConnell, 2015; Stahl et al., 2013). These restructures and layoffs often produce layoff survivors (Cotter & Fouad, 2013) who experience increased job workload, job insecurity, and occupational stress (Babakus & Yavas, 2012). Additionally, Boyd et al. (2014) found that increased role demands increased job stress because of restructuring activities.

Scholars have also discussed how the results of M&A organizational change can affect employees. For instance, Amroliwalla and Ruikar (2015) and Ribando and Evans (2015) used case study examples to discuss stress resulting from M&A activities. While Amroliwalla and Ruikar (2015) focused on the IT industry and Ribando and Evans (2015) studied a merger of post-secondary institutions, both studies found higher stress

levels among employees who had been involved in an M&A at their workplace. Additionally, although Cheng and Chang (2016) and Makri and Ntalianis (2015) both found employees involved in M&A activities experienced higher levels of stress, Makri and Ntalianis pointed out specifically that work overload and work relationships were significant stressors. Similarly, while scholars have shown that work alienation increases stress for individuals (Santas, Isik, & Demir, 2016; Yadav & Nagle, 2012), Bansal (2017) found that in a specific M&A context, perceived fairness in the form of interactional and distributive justice were significant predictors of employee alienation within the target organization. Through this research, Bansal concluded that organizational justice factors in M&A scenarios could increase worker stress through perceived alienation.

Middle manager stress in M&As. Middle managers who perceived high degrees of stress from expected organizational changes, such as increased workload, also had more negative perspectives of the change overall (Giauque, 2015). Moreover, middle managers described their stress concerning M&A activity as being related to role conflict, role ambiguity, and work overload, resulting in a loss of confidence in themselves and their abilities to do their jobs in the new organization, and fear of discipline or retaliation associated with how others perceived or judged their capabilities (Kras et al., 2017). All of these issues created additional stressors for these employees during M&A transitionary activities.

Middle managers play a pivotal role during organizational change, ensuring that information flows bi-directionally through the organization, from top to bottom and vice versa, and this is what makes organizational change successful or not (see Pärl et al.,

2016). Likewise, since middle managers play a unique role in M&A target organizations, this responsibility can evoke emotional processes among individuals in this group (Sarala et al., 2019). For instance, Sarala et al. argued that middle managers play a dual role by executing executive organizational change directives while at the same time managing the change among lower-level associates, which often leads to the need for extensive emotional labor. Harding et al. (2014) further explained this phenomenon through the characterization of middle managers, on the one hand being controlled by serving as objects of executive management, as well as serving as the controller directing lower-level employees. On the other hand, if middle managers offer resistance, they become resisters, while if associates offer resistance, the middle manager becomes resisted. Harding et al. summarized this perspective by suggesting that "senior managers are controllers who are resisted, and staff are resisters who are controlled, but middle managers are unique in that they are controllers who are also controlled, and resisters who are also resisted" (p. 1232). Finally, Harding et al. indicated that although middle managers have important roles during integration activities, they are also susceptible to stressors caused by M&A activities. These points explain how organizational change, when imposed by M&A activities, creates stress in a variety of formulations for individuals. These perspectives are also helpful in substantiating that M&A integration activities can produce stress in a variety of contexts from both an emotional and psychological perspective.

Based on these research examples, scholars have substantiated that organizational change occurs during M&A activities, and it can manifest into significant concerns for

those employees who are involved. Specifically, researchers have suggested that such dramatic organizational change generates a multitude of different types of stressors for individuals. Moreover, scholars have studied the role of middle managers in M&A activities and discussed how the changes that emerge could affect them.

Newcomer Adaptation

Theorists have explained newcomer adaptation as an organizational socialization construct, and the process a newcomer sojourns through to learn and adapt to an organization as they transform from an outsider to an insider member. For instance, Smith, Gillespie, Callan, Fitzsimmons, and Paulsen (2017) argued that newcomers use both injunctive and descriptive logics during early sense-making experiences in a new organization, and when there is an unreconciled discrepancy between what the newcomer expects at the onset of their socialization and what they come to understand as reality, stressors and negative perceptions about the organization, workgroup or job can emerge. Madlock and Chory (2014) studied newcomer adaptation and found that organizational adjustment and job adjustment were related to and could predict both role ambiguity and work alienation. In a related context, Nifadkar and Bauer (2016) found that when newcomers encountered relationship conflicts with coworkers, social anxiety increased, affecting newcomer adjustment. Likewise, Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2013) discovered that when coworkers undermined newcomers socially, which is a more subtle way of creating relationship conflict, newcomers' positive feelings about the workplace were negatively affected and, if left to linger over time, resulted in higher levels of withdrawal behaviors.

According to Jones (1986), organizational socialization is an acclimation process whereby an individual attempts to make sense of the context, content, and social aspects of their new environment. Cooper-Thomas and Wilson (2011) originally suggested a model that considered the social, ego, and performance perceived costs and benefits associated with different newcomers' adjustment tactics. Moreover, Cooper-Thomas and Stadler (2015) empirically tested this model and found that when newcomers deployed a variety of adjustment tactics, the perceived benefits were higher than perceived costs, and performance benefits and costs were most important. Successful organizational socialization emboldens newcomers to express views or suggestions not only directly related to their job but also related to broader organizational perspectives that may be either directly or indirectly related to them personally, which can benefit both the employee and the organization (see W. Wu, Tang, Dong, & Liu, 2015). While Livi et al. (2018) found that newcomer organizational socialization reduced interpersonal strain, Yozgat and Güngörmez (2015) discovered that proactive socialization and social integration approaches increased organizational commitment. Likewise, while Lapointe, Vandenberghe, and Boudrias (2014) contended that organizational socialization significantly increased role clarity, along with both affect-based supervisor and coworker trust, trust can develop, and trust dynamics in relationships with coworkers grew faster during the early stages of newcomer adaptation (van der Werff, & Buckley, 2017).

From a more precise perspective, Wang, Hom, and Allen (2017) discovered that when newcomers used three types of socialization approaches early in their employment experiences, including content, context, and social tactics, these tactics had a positive

effect on the "honeymoon-hangover" effect (see Boswell, Boudreau, & Tichy, 2005, p. 887), improving the decline in newcomers' perceptions of job satisfaction. Similarly, Kowatha (2018) argued that when newcomers used these early adaptation mechanisms in the form of social tactics, this strategy was a significant predictor of reduced role conflict, while content tactics was a significant predictor of increased role clarity. From a similar perspective, while content and social tactics are significantly related to newcomer organizational commitment, only social tactics significantly related psychological contract fulfillment (Debode, Mossholder, & Walker, 2017). Additionally, serial socialization tactics in the form of providing newcomers with role models and investiture socialization tactics, characterized as positive social support for newcomers, improved newcomers' experiences in their roles and also assisted in improving cooperative goal relationships while reducing competitive and independent goal relationships among team members (Lu & Tjosvold, 2013). In a similar context, K. Tan, Au, Cooper-Thomas, and Aw (2015) evaluated the use of communal goal strivings by newcomers and found that these types of goal strategies assisted newcomers in adapting to job, group, and organizational adjustment.

Moreover, in a longitudinal study, Dunford, Shipp, Boss, Angermeier, and Boss (2012) found that emotional exhaustion and cynicism were capable of negatively affecting newcomers and internal job changers, and these trajectories increased during the first year and then continued to increase over time to the point they were equal to or greater than the levels of the same burnout dimensions expressed by organizational insiders. Although burnout is considered a negative psychological reaction to chronic

work stress (Maslach et al., 2001), Dunford et al. suggested that newcomers and internal

job changers can suffer from burnout within their first year of tenure, and that it can grow

to be more severe over time than that of organizational insiders. Likewise, Dunford et al.

measured burnout over a 2 year period, which also suggested that there is a dynamic

factor to emotional exhaustion and cynicism for newcomers and internal job changers,

meaning that burnout emerges early but can also increase over time as this population

continues to feel stressed in their roles or within the organization.

These scholars substantiated that joining a new organization can be stressful, and

newcomers use a variety of tactics to adapt to a new organization. Likewise, while

newcomer adaptation may be considered a short-term socialization process, the outcome

of the process contributes to longer-term employee perspectives about their role, team

members, and the organization. Likewise, these researchers explained the importance of

newcomer adaptation, which in the context of an M&A relates to those in the target

organization as outsiders adjusting to the expectations and environment to become insider

members of the acquiring organization.

Job Burnout

Burnout and organizational change. Recently, scholars have studied how

changes in the workplace create stress for individuals and how those stressors are linked

to burnout dimensions. Change in the workplace creates consequences of stress and

uncertainty for employees (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016), and when individuals resist change,

it can lead to higher levels of emotional exhaustion (Turgut, Michel, Rothenhöfer, &

Sonntag, 2016). In particular, researchers found that when employees perceive

organizational change as negative such changes have a profound effect on individuals'
perspectives of overall change, leading to greater proportional negative reactions (Cullen-
Lester, Webster, Edwards, & Braddy, 2019), which, in turn, was shown to cause the
effect of positive changes to become less important or memorable (Bono, Glomb, Shen,
Kim, & Koch, 2013). On the other hand, dramatic organizational change, such as change
resulting from M&A activities, has been characterized as a type of work demand that
creates stressors for individuals, so much so that burnout can manifest in those employees
(see Day, Crown, & Ivany, 2017) and can negatively affect their health (see Khamisa,
Pelzer, Ilic, & Oldenburg, 2016). Accordingly, Smollan (2017) found that during
organizational change, characterized by restructuring actions, the stressors associated
with job uncertainty and perceived procedural justice unfairness created the greatest
anxiety for workers, leading to maladaptive coping strategies such as overeating,
drinking, and excessive rumination. Likewise, during such restructuring events, the
increased perception of job insecurity and uncertainty, which is considered by an
individual as a threat to their future and potential well-being, was related to increased
emotional exhaustion and cynicism (Shoss, Jiang, & Probst, 2018).

Specifically, organizational changes that resulted in an increased workload also
increased stress levels for individuals leading to increased cynicism (Nguyen, Teo, Pick,
& Jemai, 2018) and emotional exhaustion among the respondent group (Ilies, Huth,
Ryan, & Dimotakis, 2015; Yu et al., 2015). Likewise, scholars identified that stress and
the perceived threat related to task restructuring increased emotional exhaustion
(Nikolova, Van Ruysseveldt, De Witte, & Syroit, 2014). While Koukoulaki et al. (2017)

concurred that during the implementation of organizational changes, increased job demands and job security were related to increased levels of exhaustion, they also found that when employees perceived the change process as unfair, this perception of treatment also increased exhaustion.

Moreover, burnout and psychological distress can emerge among employees when dramatic organizational change is perceived as both negative and happening too quickly (de la Sablonnière, Tougas, de la Sablonnière, & Debrosse, 2012) or when the changes were considered by individuals as having a significant effect on their work routines or having an effect on them personally (Johnson, 2016). Likewise, burnout was shown to increase in individuals when they perceive that necessary resources available to them to cope with the extent and pace of dramatic changes were decreasing (Dubois, Bentein, Mansour, Gilbert, & Bédard, 2014). Dubois et al. also found that when employees felt burned out, they developed psychological protection mechanisms by attempting to conserve their resources and resource investments and even withdrawing from the social elements of an organization (Leiter, Day, & Price, 2015).

Middle manager burnout. Recently, scholars have also studied burnout in middle managers, and focused their research on stressors from both a job and an organizational perspective. While Moczydlowska (2016) suggested that time and job pressures, lower opportunities for development, and a lack of trust as organizational risk factors for burnout among middle managers, Leiter et al. (2015) noted that when high levels of anxiety develop in middle managers, they could feel more burned out. In an empirical study, Maldonado-Macías et al. (2015) found that 74% of middle and senior

managers experienced some level of burnout because of high work demands. Similarly, Valadez-Torres et al. (2017) found that middle managers in manufacturing environments suffered from burnout in the form of exhaustion because of increased job demands. On the one hand, physician burnout was linked to adverse work conditions (Rabatin, Williams, Manwell, Brown, & Linzer, 2016), while job demands was related to and predicted burnout in nurse managers (Adriaenssens et al., 2017). On the other hand, Van Bogaert et al. (2014) studied middle manager nurses and found that perceived role conflict and work pressure were significantly related to emotional exhaustion, with nearly 17% of the respondent group indicating they felt emotionally exhausted.

Rittschof and Fortunato (2016) studied a group of middle managers and found that all three dimensions of job burnout were significant, negative relationships to both affective and normative commitment, and significant, positive relationships to intent to quit. Rittschof and Fontunato claimed that while those managers who felt burned out expressed higher levels of feelings about quitting their jobs and leaving the organization, they also did not feel emotionally attached to their role, and nor did they feel a sense of obligation to the job. Rittschof and Fortunato also found that for middle managers, exhaustion and personal accomplishment were statistically significant predictors of affective commitment and intent to quit.

Wong and Laschinger (2015) suggested that job strain, characterized as high job demands and low levels of resources in the form of decision-making authority, was shown to be significantly related to higher levels of exhaustion, cynicism, and intent to quit, and lower levels of organization commitment. Phillips-Hall and Galbraith (2019)

posited there is a difference in the burnout phenomenon between executives and middle

managers by suggesting that from a demands-resources perspective, there is a power

imbalance between executives leading strategy and middle managers attempting to

execute it. On the one hand, executives were perceived to have greater power through

their role of communicating strategy, which, in turn, reduced demands on their resources

leading to less exhaustion. On the other hand, middle managers who were expected to

operationalize strategy were found to have greater demands on their resources, leading to

higher levels of exhaustion. Conversely, Ruppert, Miller, and Dorociak (2015)

acknowledged that when individuals find ways to identify and build or acquire resources,

the use of those resources tends to promote control over the work. Researchers have

supported the issues related to middle managers, their stressors, and specific dimensions

of burnout, which is an important dimension of this study.

Burnout and culture. Scholars have focused recent research related to burnout

and culture on different cultural dimensions and a variety of organizational factors. While

scholars agree that organizational culture is considered a multidimensional concept (see

Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2013), Ghorbanian, Naghdi, Jafari, and Sadeghi (2018)

suggested that culture is related to and can predict burnout. For instance, scholars have

discussed the relationships between burnout and organizational culture in the context of

types of cultures and roles of culture within an organization, and whether or not the

culture is deeply embedded in the organization (see Dimitrios, & Konstantinos, 2014).

Likewise, Dimitrios and Konstantinos also pointed to illustrations of a cultural

phenomenon that have been related to burnout in employees, including perceptions of

organizational support, individual support, leadership styles, social factors, workplace characteristics, and performance expectations.

Clan-type cultures, or those that are viewed as more family-oriented reduced depersonalization in doctors, while results-oriented and innovative cultures reduced emotional exhaustion in nurses (Mijakoski et al., 2015). While Sincer and Baskan (2017) found a strong relationship between a culture of fear and all three factors of burnout, Gkorezis, Petridou, and Krouklidou (2015) claimed that a culture that promotes Machiavellianism leads to higher levels of emotional exhaustion and cynicism among employees. Huhtala, Tolvanen, Mauno, and Feldt (2015) found that an ethical culture within a workgroup was associated with less burnout and higher engagement. Moreover, in a longitudinal study, Huhtala, Kaptein, and Feldt (2016) argued that a stable, ethical culture leads to lower manager burnout, while managers in decreasing or low ethical cultures reported higher levels of burnout, especially cynicism for those working in decreasing ethical cultures.

Since organizational values are known to be a strong characteristic in defining an organizational culture (Schein, 1990), when an individual's perceptions of organizational values, characterized as support, rules, goal or innovation-oriented values, were seen as helping factors, burnout was significantly reduced (Matziari, Montgomery, Georganta, & Doulougeri, 2017). In the same study, organizational values, defined as all four values orientations, explained between 7 to 11 percent of the variance in predicting depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, respectively. Likewise, Bilal and Ahmed (2017) found that when the organizational culture promotes participative decision-

making and communication structures allow for dialog and encourage collaboration,

employees feel both trusted and respected, and this reduces feelings of stress. On the

other hand, from a communication network perspective, Phillips-Hall and Galbraith

(2019) posited that while strategic managerial decision-making within the network

reduced exhaustion, technical and operational communication increased exhaustion. In

the same study, Phillips-Hall and Galbraith found that when there was a lack of overall

cultural consensus between managers and executives, managers expressed higher levels

of cynicism. More specifically, linkages between other organizational variables such as

rewards, fairness, connections to the organizational community, and values were found to

be related to and predicted the three burnout factors (McFadden, Mallett, & Leiter, 2016).

In particular, mismatched expectations in the form of work expectations were linked to

exhaustion, while incongruences emerging from perceived fairness and fairness

expectations were associated with cynicism (Mojsa-Kaja et al., 2015).

Effect of Time

The effect of time has been studied in a variety of perspectives and contexts using

longitudinal research methods. In support of the introduction of time in this study as a

moderator variable, longitudinal research was evaluated in the context of the proposed

theoretical framework, conceptualized as organizational socialization. Furthermore, the

constructs of newcomer adaptation, organizational change, stress, and burnout were

evaluated in the context of time to examine the effect of time on each of them and how,

over time, these perspectives can change or fluctuate.

Organizational socialization and newcomer adaptation over time. In early longitudinal research, Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg (2003) studied newcomer adjustment outcomes over time to determine whether proximal outcomes could predict positive or negative distal outcomes four months later. When Kammeyer-Mueller and Wanberg evaluated work domain proximal outcomes in the form of task mastery, they found that when task mastery adjustment was successful, there was less work withdrawal four months later. Likewise, when role clarity was successful, there was greater organizational commitment and less work withdrawal four months later. Furthermore, when measured earlier in the adjustment process, socialization influences in the form of support from supervisors was linked to political knowledge, while support from coworkers was significantly related to group integration four months later (Kammeyer-Mueller & Wanberg, 2003).

In early research, Cooper-Thomas, and Anderson (2003) evaluated adjustment time periods and found that significant adjustment took place over the first eight weeks of employment and substantiating the argument that organizational socialization was a learning process. In evaluating more recent research studies on newcomer adaptation, Bauer et al. (2007) uncovered metadata analysis of time trajectories related to key adjustment processes. Through further analysis, Bauer and Erdogan (2011) claimed that these key adjustment processes begin at the onset of the newcomer entering the new work environment and change rapidly over the first three months post-entry. Furthermore, Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2013) contended that supervisor and coworker support in the

first 90 days of the newcomer's adjustment period promotes both proactive socialization and positivity.

Ellis et al. (2015) argued that entering a new work environment is stressful for the newcomer, specifically in the context of uncertainty associated with task expectations, developing relationships, and understanding cultural norms. Moreover, effective organizational socialization reduces this uncertainty, which is important to the success of newcomer adaptation and the individual's well-being (Ellis et al., 2015). Additionally, as newcomers build relationships over time within the organization, these socialization approaches are related to job embeddedness and a sense of commitment to the work environment (Allen & Rhoades-Shanock, 2015). On the other hand, Ganster and Rosen (2013) argued that when short-term socialization processes are hampered, stressors may emerge, and when these experiences persist and accumulate over time, this can lead to burnout (Maslach, 2017). For instance, changes in socialization processes such as role clarity, social acceptance, and task mastery are related to changes in burnout during the first year of employment, and these relationships persist when measured again after three years of employment (Frögli et al., 2019).

Cultural adaptation from a newcomer's perspective has also been studied. Y. Tan and Shen (2016) found that like other adaptation processes, cultural adaptation and group adaptation processes begin early in a newcomer's experience, with the more intense rate of change occurring in the first four months of the adjustment period. Turker and Altuntas (2015) argued that, over time, newcomers adjust to an organizational culture based on a comparison between their conceptualization of the culture and their

perceptions of their supervisor's perspectives of the culture. For instance, early in the

newcomer's experience, while supervisors perceived the cultural attribute of

supportiveness was important, newcomers felt that stability was more important.

However, with respect to the same cultural attribute over time, newcomers' perception of

supportiveness grew to the point whereby it was more important than the supervisor's

perception of it. Similarly, newcomers perceived the cultural attribute of success

orientation was important early in their adjustment experience. However, over time,

people-orientation became more important for newcomers, and at that later time in their

adjustment period, this perception began to more closely align with the supervisors'

perception of the importance of that attribute. Therefore, not only do newcomer cultural

adaptation perceptions change over time but also these cultural adjustment perceptions

between the newcomer and the supervisor converge as the adjustment experience

progresses (see Turker & Altuntas, 2015).

Similarly, newcomer group adaptation has been investigated using longitudinal

research methods. van Veelen, Eisenbeiss, and Otten (2016) studied how newcomers

adapt and develop identities associated with their workgroups and how these identities

connect them as insider members to these groups. Firstly, to conform to the group, van

Veelen et al. (2016) found that newcomers transform their identities over time; however,

significant change takes place early in the adjustment period. Additionally, early on,

newcomers seek affiliations, which assists in developing group relationships. However,

over time newcomers will collect and evaluate experiences within the workgroup and

compare them to a former outgroup before they determine their allegiance to or favor for new workgroup as an ingroup (van Veelen et al., 2016).

Although slightly different from organizational socialization, expatriate adaptation has also been studied as a form of cultural adaptation. Recently, scholars examining sojourner cultural adaptation, whereby an individual must adapt to a host location, suggested that stress levels fluctuate over the time of the experience (Demes & Geeraert, 2015). For instance, Demes and Geeraert found that different groups perceived different levels of stress over time, whereby one group felt very stressed at the beginning of the international experience, while another group was less stressed at the beginning, but stress peaked four months into the experience.

Organizational change and stress over time. Recent longitudinal research has added new perspectives regarding M&A change and stress. Thus, through the lens of longitudinal research, as M&A activities progress, researchers found that fear and insecurity is measured by employees through a cost-benefit analysis, with job uncertainty and job continuity perceived as personal costs (Sung et al., 2017), and these factors increase stress levels for individuals (Smollan & Pio, 2018). Likewise, on the one hand, Smollan (2015a) found that while physiological, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive reactions to stress existed before an organizational change, physiological and behavioral reactions intensified during and after the change. On the other hand, Smollan and Pio argued that employees' self-perceptions were affected at different times during stressful organizational change and stressors emerging from the change affect all forms of identity

in respondents, and this was true for all phases of the change, but especially during and after the change.

Grumbach et al. (2019) studied organizational changes in two different healthcare settings simultaneously and argue that although trajectories were different between the two cohorts, both emotional exhaustion and cynicism fluctuated over time as the change processes and transformation progressed from year to year. Furthermore, Petrou, Demerouti, and Schaufeli (2015) found that when employees determined that at the start of the change process, the effect of the change was perceived as high, they reported higher levels of exhaustion at the peak of the implementation one year later. Moreover, de Fátima-Nery, Sanches-Franco, and Rabelo-Neiva (2019) examined perceptions of risk and change planning associated with organizational change and found that perceived risks significantly predicted fear, skepticism, and acceptance of change over time, while the same time periods, change planning predicted acceptance of change and skepticism. de Fátima-Nery et al. (2019) also concluded that while perceptions of organizational change shift over time, the changes in those perceptions did not negatively affect well-being.

Stress over time. Scholars have used longitudinal studies to examine stress and changes in stress over time. For instance, Barck-Holst et al. (2017) examined how changes in working hours affected stress among social workers and concluded that during an 18-month period, when working hours went down, both stress levels and exhaustion also went down. Additionally, Hermon and Chahla (2019) examined different types of stress levels among social workers over time and found that workload stress significantly

increased over a two-year period, while child-related stress significantly decreased. From a different perspective, S. Hu et al. (2017) contended that when younger workers perceived they received negative feedback about their work performance, their stress levels increase over time. Similarly, K. Han et al. (2019) evaluated stress levels among young nurses and found that over a two-year period, stress levels changed significantly within the first six weeks of employment and remained high through the first six months. Moreover, K. Han et al. argued that although these stress levels lessoned after twelve months of employment, they were nearly three times higher than the baseline measure after two years on the job. Among incoming college freshmen, Garrett et al. (2017) found that stress levels fluctuated over the first quarter of school, with stress increasing overall throughout the quarter and peaking during mid-term and final exam periods.

Burnout over time. Maslach (2017) contended that burnout is a chronic condition, emerging over time, resulting from prolonged stressors experienced on the job and in the work environment. In early longitudinal research, Schaufeli, Bakker, and Van Rhenen (2009) found that increased job demands, and reduced job resources increased burnout over time. Through more recent longitudinal research, scholars have examined the prevalence, pervasiveness, and persistence of burnout over time across a variety of populations and within distinctive situational and contextual settings. For instance, in the healthcare industry, Pisanti et al. (2016) found that as nursing job demands increased over time, exhaustion and cynicism also increased. Additionally, in the same study, Pisanti et al. found that the increase in exhaustion was also linked to a decrease in job control and social support. In a similar context, Trépanier, Fernet, and Austin (2015)

found that nurses subjected to workplace social stressors, in the form of persistent

bullying, led to burnout over time. On the other hand, Dutch nurses facing additional

work demands, in the form of emotional, quantitative, physical demands, or work-family

conflict, experienced high levels of burnout (Van der Heijden, Mahoney, & Xu, 2019). In

fact, when compared to all other demands, quantitative demands affected burnout by a

factor four times greater than any other type of demand (Van der Heijden et al., 2019).

When examining burnout in physicians, Meier et al. (2015) contended that when

Swiss general practitioner physicians experience a lack of reward from their patients,

emotional exhaustion significantly increased over time, but cynicism did not significantly

change year over year. Similarly, Hwang et al. (2018) found that medical students

experienced fluctuating levels of emotional exhaustion and cynicism over the four-year

period of their residency. Likewise, Monrouxe, Bullock, Tseng, and Wells (2017) found

that several types of burnout in young doctors, including personal, patient-related, and

work-related burnout, changed over time. Monrouxe et al. also found that both personal

and work-related burnout in this population fluctuated over time regardless of whether

their first-year residency assignments were located nearby or in a different location.

However, when these residency assignments were not located nearby, personal burnout

rose three-fold over time.

Travis et al. (2015) found that in a population of social workers, stressors such as

role conflict and work-family conflict, were significantly and directly related to burnout

over time. Martinez-Íñigo and Totterdell (2016) examined surface acting among

healthcare workers and found that over time as surface acting increased, burnout also

increased, and while distributive justice mediated this relationship, the direct and indirect effects of surface acting on burnout changed significantly over time. Furthermore, while Q. Hu et al. (2017) studied police officers over time and found that increased job demands increased job burnout, and increased job resources decreased burnout, Angelo and Chambel (2015) found that burnout in firefighters increased over time because of the demands of that type of work. Moreover, as job demands persist over time, so does burnout, and conversely, the condition is not successfully mediated by increased social support or control over the work (Fagerlind-Ståhl, Ståhl, & Smith, 2018). When examining a population of middle school students in Korea, B. Kim et al. (2017) argued that emotional exhaustion and cynicism significantly increased over time because of an effort-reward imbalance. Furthermore, B. Kim et al. also found that this burnout phenomenon existed within individuals but also among the group of students.

As it relates to an individual's experience with burnout over time, Cain et al. (2017) argued that as work conditions change, those reporting burnout also change, with the levels of reported exhaustion and lack of personal accomplishment higher than levels of depersonalization over time. On the one hand, Hansell et al. (2019) reported that as students traverse through medical school, burnout begins in the early stages of education, with moderate to large fluctuations in both exhaustion and depersonalization over time. On the other hand, Cull, Frintner, Starmer, and Leslie (2019) suggested that pediatricians reporting burnout over time increased significantly, primarily because of workplace stressors, such as job demands.

In conclusion, I used longitudinal studies to support the conceptualization of time as a moderator variable in this study. During this examination, I found that researchers have evaluated the effect of time on organizational socialization from a variety of perspectives and contended that newcomer adaption takes place early in the socialization experiences and changes over time. Furthermore, when early socialization experiences are effective, newcomer adaption leads to longer term positive outcomes for an individual. Likewise, the effects of organizational change have been measured over time in a variety of contexts, suggesting that as these types of changes evolve, responses to such changes also evolve. Similarly, when the concept of stress was studied over time, researchers have substantiated that stress levels change and can fluctuate over time. Regarding the burnout construct, scholars argued that burnout changes and fluctuates over time in a variety of situational and contextual settings. Likewise, individuals' experiences with burnout and perceptions of stress change over time as the environment changes. Therefore, my analysis of longitudinal studies concluded that the various perspectives of organizational adaptation, organizational change, stress and burnout and the effect of time informed and helped to substantiate the use of time as a moderator variable in this study examining M&A cultural adaptation, operationalized as newcomer adaptation, and burnout.

Summary

In chapter 2, I outlined theoretical concepts, and I examined and explained recent research associated with the subjects of M&As, newcomer adaptation, and burnout. I applied specific consideration to research related to middle managers, which is conceived

as the population of interest in this study. Scholars suggested that there is a link between M&As and organizational change. Newcomer adaptation theorists claimed, and researchers argued that it can be stressful for a new joiner when they sojourn from an outsider to an organizational insider and that early adaptation experiences are an important success factor. Researchers contended that organizational change and culture are related to the three dimensions of burnout. I used longitudinal research to construct the operationalization of time as a possible factor affecting cultural adaptation and burnout in an M&A scenario and I substantiated this perspective with a detailed analysis of the effects of time on organizational change processes, stress, and burnout, and how stress and burnout change and fluctuate over time. Moreover, although I found recent research associated with M&As, organizational change, stress, and burnout in a variety of contextual and situational perspectives, and the importance of culture in these contexts, researchers have not specifically examined linkages between cultural adaptation, conceptualized as newcomer adaptation, and the associated stressors among middle managers in an M&A scenario. Similarly, although scholars have indicated that burnout is an enduring condition, researchers have not yet conceptualized the effect of time on the development of burnout resulting from cultural adaptation processes in M&A scenarios. In Chapter 3, I will outline the research design, rationale, and methodology for the study, and I will reiterate the purpose of the study and the research questions. Moreover, details will be provided regarding the targeted population, data collection, and data analysis strategies proposed for this study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this nonexperimental quantitative study was to evaluate whether newcomer adaptation, when experienced over time, was related to, or could predict job burnout in middle managers working in target organizations engaged in M&A activities. I formulated the independent variables in the study as organizational and group adjustment, and defined the criterion variables as exhaustion and cynicism, which are two dimensions from the burnout construct. An intervening variable, conceptualized as the elapsed time from a merger announcement, was added to determine if time moderated the relationship between newcomer adaptation and burnout. The goal of this study was to add to the body of research on burnout through the conceptualization of stressors associated with newcomer adaptation, considering the interaction of time, among a specific population of middle managers, who are an integral, and thus, an important part of an organization (see Pärl et al., 2016).

Research Design and Rationale

The nature of this study was quantitative research using a nonexperimental design approach, which was an appropriate design either when independent variables are not being manipulated or when specific time periods are not the focus of the investigation. Likewise, this approach was consistent with understanding relationships, and the strength of them, between independent variables and criterion variables through correlation analysis, including regression analysis techniques (see Warner, 2013). Quantitative research is useful when attempting to translate specific concepts into an unambiguous

operational definition that can be adequately measured (Cox, 2016). Specifically, I operationalized burnout as emotional exhaustion and cynicism, which are two of the three dimensions of burnout, serving as criterion variables. On the other hand, newcomer adaptation, which I operationalized as organizational adjustment and group adjustment, served as the predictor or independent variables.

Scholars that studied newcomer adaptation (Dunford et al., 2012; Kowatha, 2018; Madlock & Chory, 2014; Smith et al., 2017) and burnout (Guan et al., 2017; Kubayi, 2018; Lawrence et al., 2019; May et al., 2018; Xu, 2019) suggested that age, gender, and job tenure should be aligned as control variables. Therefore, I collected a number of demographic characteristics from the participants, including age, gender, and managerial tenure within the target organization. This demographic information formulated a series of controlling variables in the study.

Although I did not develop a longitudinal design for the study, I used longitudinal research from other scholars to substantiate the argument for the moderating variable in my study. For instance, Smollan (2015a) found that while physiological, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive reactions to work stress existed when implementing organizational change, physiological and behavioral reactions intensified during and after the change. Pisanti et al. (2016) argued that exhaustion and cynicism changed over time as job demands changed. This outcome further substantiates that burnout factors are progressive as changes take place in organizations. Therefore, I conceptualized a moderator variable, measuring the elapsed time from the original merger announcement, which was used to determine how time affected newcomer adjustment related to burnout.

The drawbacks of this design were primarily cost. The MBI-GS required funding to purchase the rights to use the instrument. The extent of this expense was based on the power analysis that suggested the appropriate size of the respondent group. Although a convenience sampling through AMT can be useful in locating hard-to-find populations, a drawback to the use of this technique was also cost. Funding was required to pay the survey company, construct specific worker requirements, and compensate the workers who ultimately participated in the study. There was also an additional cost required to upgrade to a higher version of the SurveyMonkey tool. There were no grants or subsidies used to support the cost of this research; I funded the entire cost.

Methodology

Population

Organizations. I defined the population for this study based on an organizational definition, as well as an individual participant definition. The population of organizations for this study was those that had been purchased in an M&A transaction in the United States and were referred to as the target organization. Furthermore, these target organizations were defined as those that were currently engaged in integration activities or had completed those activities within the last three years. According to IMAA (2019), M&A activity in 2017 and 2018 in the United States was higher than in prior time periods post the global financial crisis, with approximately 30,000 mergers closing in those 2 years. Based on 2019 first-half M&A analysis, IMAA (2019) suggested that 6,300 mergers have occurred in the United States this year. Therefore, a conservative estimate

of the population of companies in the United States that have been targets of merger and acquisition activity over the past 2.5 years ranges between 30,000 and 36,300 entities.

Individual participants. Many M&A activities and subsequent organizational changes require individuals in the target organization to adjust to new cultural, group, and job expectations or requirements of the acquiring organization (see Brueller et al., 2018). Thus, these types of newcomer adjustments are cultivated through experiences and shared understanding of new organizational expectations (Smith et al., 2017), and often symptoms of stress among employees based on these adaptations do not immediately emerge (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Consequently, based on the timing of the acquisition, selecting a population of merger targets within a 3-year time window seemed prudent.

Middle managers or those that directly supervise workers in the target organizations are typically expected to integrate sooner into the acquired organization in order to drive organizational changes and directives arising out of M&A objectives (see Harding et al., 2014; Sarala et al., 2019). Thus, to determine how newcomer adjustment relates to burnout, the participants intended for this study consisted of middle managers in target organizations of M&A scenarios. Middle managers were defined as nonexecutive managers who operate as a liaison between the executive or senior manager level and supervisors or the individual contributors (see Harding et al., 2014). Additionally, middle managers defined for this study were also to have at least two direct reports. Given the size of this population, and the number of middle managers within any one individual organization likely varies to some degree, it was difficult to determine

how large this population may be. However, through the use of an AMT recruiting strategy I found, the size of the middle manager population to be suitable for this study.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

The sample appropriate for this study was meant to develop a cross-section of middle managers who were currently part of a target organization, which had been acquired and was engaged in M&A integration activities. I evaluated several sampling strategies for this study, including convenience sampling using crowdsourcing platforms, known as AMT, Prolific Academic (PA), and CrowdFlower (CF), and snowball sampling through social media platforms. Academic research using crowdsourcing platforms is growing in popularity (Bartel-Sheehan, 2018), often due to the convenience of the platform, speed of the responses, and the reduced cost of recruitment (Hulland & Miller, 2018). These crowdsourcing platforms, which are considered online labor markets, recruit individuals as workers to complete various tasks distributed by requesters on the platform to the crowd (Cheung, Burns, Sinclair, & Sliter, 2017). Although anonymous, these workers are diverse, having various demographic characteristics and different situational perspectives (see Bartel-Sheehan, 2018), and they can choose the tasks they wish to complete for compensation (see Cheung et al., 2017).

In determining which platform to use for this study, both PA and CF were discarded after a brief analysis. For example, when developing a pricing model for PA, this service could not support a sample size of less than 500 (see Prolific Academic, 2020). Likewise, while Peer, Brandimarte, Samat, and Acquisti (2017) found that the dropout rate, or those that did not complete the survey, was 3.3% higher on PA than

AMT, they also found the response rates using PA where much slower. On the other hand, Peer et al. reported that CF had a much smaller worker group of 10,000 workers when compared to the AMT workforce of 500,000, participants on the CF platform were less attentive, and the platform was less flexible in screening participants. Finally, workers that use both the CF and PA platforms are primarily from Europe and Asia (Peer et al., 2017), making this population ineligible for this study, which was focused on companies in the United States.

After completing the research into the use of online labor markets, I determined the primary sampling strategy for this study would utilize a convenience sampling approach through the AMT crowdsourcing platform based on the following analysis. Amazon launched Mechanical Turk into the marketplace in 2005, making it the first provider of an online marketplace (Hulland & Miller, 2018). There were several advantages to using AMT as a participant recruiting strategy. For example, Hulland and Miller that the costs associated with using AMT are lower than other survey companies, even when considering an ethical compensation factor equal to a reasonable minimum wage based on the estimated time workers would spend on the survey (see Bartel-Sheehan, 2018). Furthermore, the speed at which researchers can collect survey data is also faster using AMT than other platforms, such as PA, with large amounts of data collected in a few hours or days (Bartel-Sheehan, 2018; Peer et al., 2017). Likewise, although the AMT workers are considered diverse from an industry perspective or organizational context (Hulland & Miller, 2018), a key demographic characteristic of these workers is that a large proportion of this online labor market is from the United

States (Peer et al., 2017), which was the target population in this study. Moreover, although Cheung et al. (2017) argued that the use of convenience samples can limit generalizability, the use of AMT neither improves nor worsens this issue. On the other hand, when using AMT to collect data through answering specific survey questions, Hulland and Miller suggested that data quality has been found to be high, likely due to the compensation a worker can earn through properly completing the work item. Likewise, AMT had the flexibility to develop prescreening questions, which were used to screen out those workers that did not match the target population of the study and was considered a best practice for researchers to identify the correct workers among the online labor market when using this platform (see Bartel-Sheehan, 2018). Finally, Cheung et al. pointed out that due to the size and diversity of its online labor market, AMT is useful in locating hard to find research participants. Thus, I facilitated the primary recruiting strategy for the study through AMT, which supported the need for a variety of organizational contexts, various elapsed M&A time frames, and individual and leader dimensions such as age, gender, and managerial tenure across the United States. As a contingency recruiting strategy, I also considered the use of social media platforms, such as Facebook and LinkedIn. However, this approach was not required, and therefore, it was abandoned.

I conducted a power analysis to determine the appropriate sample size using the G*Power software and associated procedural recommendations from Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, and Lang (2009). Beyond a *P*-value, which suggests whether an effect exists, the effect size chosen for a study was an important relationship to sample size as a way to

mitigate Type II errors (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012). Moreover, Type II errors can occur when a researcher fails to reject a null hypothesis that is actually false (see Sullivan & Feinn, 2012; Warner, 2013), and thus, ensuring the sample size is large enough or the study has enough power is one way to reduce the probability of making a Type II error (Sullivan & Feinn, 2012). Additionally, when incorporating a moderator variable, Aguinis and Stone-Romero (1997) cautioned that if the sample size or effect size is too small, it may be difficult to detect an interaction because of low power. Furthermore, Aguinis and Stone-Romero suggested that when comparing sample sizes of $N = 60$ and $N = 300$, the moderated multiple regression power increased from .21 to .69 for a medium effect size. This outcome yielded a much higher degree of power when compared to a small effect size for the same sample size comparisons, .08 and .24, respectively.

I completed the power analysis using the Faul et al. (2009) procedural recommendations for multiple regression and considered the guidance from Aguinis and Stone-Romero (1997) concerning sample size. The parameters entered included an α (error probability or a significance level) of .05 and .01, a power level ($R^2 – 1\text{-}\beta$; error of probability) of .95 and .99, a medium effect size (f^2) of .15 with five predictor variables (organizational adjustment, group adjustment, age, tenure, and gender). The recommended sample size ranges from 138 to 231 (see Figure 1).
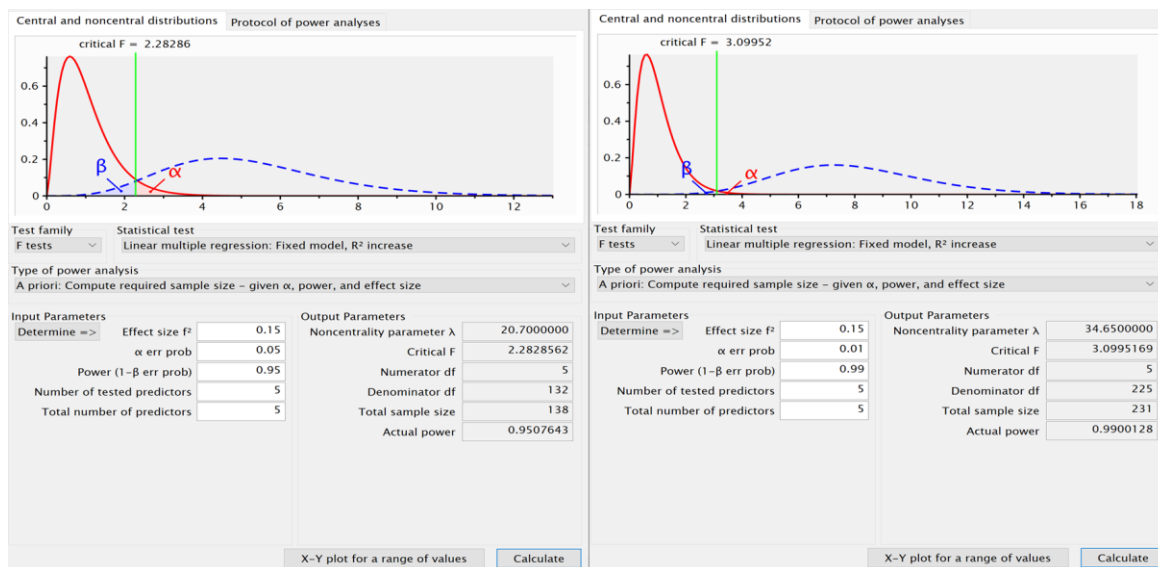
Figure 1. Graphical representation of G*Power 3.1.9.4 Analysis to determine sample size.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

I collected all data for this quantitative study electronically online through the AMT crowdsourcing platform, with responses to the survey questions collected through SurveyMonkey. Throughout this data collection process, neither the name of the individual nor the target organization was collected, and the invitation and the consent form included statements emphasizing the anonymity of the responses. I invited individuals to participate based on self-selection matching the initial demographic and definitional data requested from the AMT platform and explained in the AMT HIT, and again in the consent form. The invitation described the participant as a middle manager who supervised subordinates, which was defined as someone who had at least two direct reports and worked for the target company of an M&A within the last 3 years. In addition to responding to specific questions from the research instruments that will be discussed later, I asked the participants to supply demographic data in the form of gender, age, and

managerial tenure. Management tenure was defined as the number of years the individual had served in a nonexecutive, middle manager role. Additionally, participants were asked to provide organizational data in the form of the acquisition date, defined as the month and year the merger was announced within their organization.

To express interest in the survey, participants responded to the AMT HIT. Once participants accepted the AMT HIT, they gained access to the survey through a link in the AMT HIT. I structured the link as a one-time use to avoid duplicate responses from a single individual. The consent form was included in the survey link as part of the data collection process. Additionally, the informed consent I provided to the participants indicated they could exit the study at any time and informed them on how to do so. Before a worker on the AMT platform can be paid, the HIT must be reviewed and approved. Therefore, I reviewed each HIT and if the AMT worker completed the survey, I approved and paid for the HIT.

I had no intended follow-ups defined for this quantitative study. Therefore, reasonable measures were taken to protect respondent anonymity. For example, an email address was not necessary to receive a link to the survey instruments and participants were not asked to identify themselves personally within the data collection process or mechanisms. Likewise, in the event a participant contacted me with questions on the AMT HIT, the email address used for correspondence with them was held separately from the data collection and access managed through protected files. Once the data was collected, I managed it through protected files and restricted access or otherwise, I held it under lock and key in a separate, nonpublic area.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

I collected all the data for this quantitative study electronically through online questionnaires using existing published instruments. An examination of each instrument chosen to support this research study is provided here. This analysis includes a brief historical synopsis of the development of the survey instrument, including validity and reliability procedures and outcomes. Example items, along with the scale anchors, are also documented.

Organizational adjustment. I operationalized organizational adjustment as one of the two independent variables in this study. Theorists argued that newcomer organizational socialization as a form of cultural adaptation is considered learning about "values, goals, rules, politics, customs, leadership styles and language" (Haueter et al., 2003, p. 24) in an institutional context. Brueller et al. (2018) contended that often in an M&A scenario, middle managers in the target organization must transition from an organizational culture of known certainty to a foreign environment, based on a legacy that is unfamiliar to them. Myers and Oetzel (2003) originally conceptualized and developed an organization assimilation index, however, Gailliard, Myers, & Seibold (2010a) contended it lacked a number of dimensional characteristics that could be used to detect group differences and extend the use of the instrument. Thus, Gailliard et al. reevaluated the original instrument, including additional reliability and validity analysis, and extended it to improve assimilation research.

Therefore, to measure organizational adjustment in middle managers in merger targets, I used the Organizational Assimilation Index- Extended Version (Gailliard et al.,

2010a) (Appendix A). The acculturation subscale measures four items ("I know the values of my organization"), using a 7-point, Likert-like scale ranging from 1 – strongly disagree to 7- strongly agree. The reliability of the instrument has been tested several times. Gailliard et al. extended the instrument by recruiting a cross-section of full-time managerial employees in the United States and found the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the acculturation subscale was .84, which was an improvement over the original instrument. Scholars conducted subsequent studies that yielded Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .77 to .90 (Sollitto, Johnson, & Myers, 2013; Sollitto, Martin, Dusic, Gibbons, & Wagenhouser, 2016). Researchers further examined this instrument and produced Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .84 to .89 (Cranmer, Goldman, & Booth-Butterfield, 2017; Goldman & Myers, 2015).

One way validity was tested for this instrument was by evaluating group differences, such as gender and position differences. Gailliard et al. (2010a) used MANOVA testing and suggested that multidimensional assimilation experience differences, represented by the revised instrument, were adequately detected. Additionally, Gailliard et al. tested the organizational assimilation dimensions for associations between organizational identification and job satisfaction constructs and claimed that correlations between the instrument and the two related constructs ranged from .26 to .63, with specific and moderate relationships between the acculturation subscale and organizational identification and job satisfaction identified as .34 and .41, respectively. This instrument may be reproduced and used for educational purposes without seeking written permission (Gailliard, Myers, & Seibold, 2010b).

Group adjustment. I operationalized group adjustment as one of the two independent variables in this study. Leaving a familiar environment for one which is unknown and untested can affect the sense of community (see Maslach et al., 2001). Likewise, Nifadkar and Bauer (2016) contended that newcomers must adjust socially, connecting with workgroups, or developing bonds with other individuals within the organization. Therefore, group socialization is similar to organizational socialization, although focused on the workgroup in terms of learning behaviors related to values, goals, and rules (see Haueter et al., 2003), which develop a sense of belonging and connectedness for the newcomer (Selmer & Lauring, 2016).

Several belongingness instruments were evaluated, including the General Belongingness Scale (GBS) (Malone, Pillow, & Osman, 2012), the Workplace Belonging Scale (Jena & Pradhan, 2018), and the Belongingness at Work Scale (Den Hartog, De Hoogh, & Keegan, 2007b). While the GBS scale focuses on both acceptance (inclusion) and rejection (exclusion) (Malone et al., 2012), the wording of items in the scale was far too general for the operational definition of group adjustment in this study, which was contextually defined as workgroup adjustment. In a similar yet different outcome, the analysis of the Workplace Belongingness Scale (Jena & Pradhan, 2018) was not focused contextually on a workgroup, but rather on the overall organization. Likewise, because I used several instruments in this study, along with a request for demographic data, and since both instruments consisted of 12 items, survey fatigue was also a consideration I evaluated. Thus, following this examination, I decided to use the Belongingness at Work Scale (Den Hartog et al., 2007b) (Appendix B) to measure group adjustment.

Godard (2001) originally developed this instrument using a population of workers in Canada. Although validity metrics were not available from this study, Godard (2001) reported reliability as a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .73. Den Hartog et al. (2007b) further tested the reliability of the instrument and found the Cronbach's alpha coefficient to be .72. Fornell and Larcker (1981) used confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and found there were two employee-reported variables (charisma and belongingness). Fornell and Larcker conducted further validity testing through a procedure using the variance extracted elements from the CFA and comparing them to the square of the correlations between two tested constructs. Den Hartog et al. used this procedure and found that the variance extracted element for belongingness (.49) exceeded the square of the correlations between the two constructs (.05) and substantiated the validity of the instrument. This scale measures three items ("When at work, I really feel like I belong") rated on a 5-point Likert-like scale ranging from 1 – not at all to 5 – very much so (Den Hartog et al., 2007b). This instrument may be reproduced and used for educational purposes without seeking written permission (Den Hartog, De Hoogh, & Keegan, 2007a).

Burnout. I operationalized emotional exhaustion and cynicism as the criterion variables in this study. After initial qualitative exploration into burnout established the foundation for the phenomenon, Maslach and Jackson (1981) developed a measurement scale that could be used for empirical quantitative research in health and services occupations. The initial work by Maslach and Jackson (1981) in developing the instrument yielded three subscales known as exhaustion, cynicism, and professional accomplishment, which are still in use today.

The reliability of the original instrument was measured using both a frequency and intensity metric. Using this framework, Maslach and Jackson (1981) found the internal consistency was high with Cronbach's alpha coefficients equaling .89 for frequency and .86 for intensity for the exhaustion subscale; .77 for frequency and .72 for intensity for the cynicism subscale, and .74 for both frequency and intensity for the personal accomplishment subscale. Over time, and in support of extending burnout research beyond helping and caregiver roles, a general survey instrument was developed and has tested burnout across occupational settings and job types (see Bakker, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2002; Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996). Furthermore, Leiter and Schaufeli (1996) conducted reliability testing across different occupational settings and job types and found that Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranged between .84 and .90 for exhaustion, .74 and .84 for cynicism, and between .70 and .78 for efficacy. Thus, when considering the evaluation of reliability outcomes for social science analysis, a Cronbach's α coefficient of .70 is considered appropriate (Schutte, Toppinen, Kalimo, & Schaufeli, 2000), the MBI-GS is a highly reliable measure of all subfactors of burnout.

Validity was also an important consideration when choosing a measurement instrument, and the MBI-GS survey has been shown to have strong validity. For example, construct validity has been tested in several ways. Scholars compared an individual's MBI ratings with independent evaluations of an individual's behaviors from both professional and personal perspectives using coworkers and significant others and found strong correlations between emotional exhaustion and cynicism and an individual's MBI scores (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Researchers

correlated MBI scores with job characteristics thought to contribute to burnout and found

that high workloads correlated with higher emotional exhaustion and cynicism scores,

while having clear job expectations and feedback about performance were correlated with

lower emotional exhaustion scores and higher personal accomplishment scores (Maslach

& Jackson, 1981; Maslach et al., 1996; Taris, Schreurs, & Schaufeli, 1999). Moreover,

Maslach and Jackson continued to test validity correlating MBI scores with various

personal outcomes, such as job dissatisfaction, intention to quit, fractured personal

relationships, or a desire to spend less time working or interacting with people, which

were all considered related to burnout. In this case, Maslach and Jackson found all such

outcomes correlated with high emotional exhaustion and cynicism scores and lower

personal accomplishment scores. Furthermore, scholars evaluated construct validity

through factorial analysis across various occupational subgroups and settings and found

that the subscales were structurally independent factors (Bakker et al., 2002; Schutte et

al., 2000; Taris et al., 1999). Likewise, I found information in the third edition manual of

this instrument that indicated that validity analysis also considered European samples

from The Netherlands and Finland, as well as Canada and the United States (Schaufeli et

al., 1996).

Thus, I assessed burnout using the exhaustion and cynicism subscales from the

16-item MBI–GS (Schaufeli et al., 1996) (Appendix C). Specifically, the two dimensions

of burnout relevant to this study included exhaustion (measured by five items; "I feel

tired when I get up in the morning and have to face another day in the job") and cynicism

(measured by five items; "I have become less enthusiastic about my work") (see

Schaufeli et al., 1996). As recommended by the published author of the instrument, a

seven-point Likert-like scale ranging from 0 – never to 6 – every day was implemented

(Schaufeli et al., 1996). Additionally, based on the review of the literature I completed for

this study, this measure is one of the most frequently used and well-known instruments

measuring burnout.

This instrument is not in the public domain and was purchased at the cost of $50

for the manual and $2.50 for each license required. While I used AMT as the tool to

recruit participants, I used SurveyMonkey as the data collection mechanism. I embedded

the link to the survey in SurveyMonkey as part of the AMT HIT. Therefore, although I

was only licensed to use this instrument on SurveyMonkey, because of the approach I

used to construct both the AMT HIT and the data collection in SurveyMonkey, I did not

violate the terms of the MBI-GS license agreement.

Moderator variable. Baron and Kenny (1986) argued that moderator variables

are considered a third type of variable and are included in research studies to evaluate

interactions related to the strength or direction of the relationship between independent

and criterion variables and in particular, the effect of the independent variable on the

criterion variable. I included a moderator variable measuring elapsed time from the

original merger announcement. Firstly, in a longitudinal research study, Pisanti et al.

(2016) found that exhaustion and cynicism can change over time as the environment

changes. Likewise, Smollan (2015a) evaluated stress levels before, during, and after the

organizational change was announced and found that stress levels caused intensified

physiological and behavioral responses both during the change process and after the

implementation. Similarly, adjustment is a process that requires time to execute, and in particular, newcomer adaptation is a process whereby an individual journeys from being an organizational outsider to an insider member (Park et al., 2018) and is completed through a series of phases (see Louis, 1980). Moreover, important adjustment processes occur early in newcomer experiences (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011), and these outcomes help to reduce uncertainty, and in turn, reduce stress for the individual (Ellis et al., 2015).

Thus, I conceptualized that since integration activities and the subsequent adaptation expectations commence following the announcement of a merger, the degree of adjustment achieved or how well individuals perceive they are adapting to the acquired organization or their assigned workgroup and the relationship to the predictor variables may be affected by the amount of time these expectations or activities have been in progress. Likewise, since burnout emerges because of prolonged work stress (see Maslach & Leiter, 2017), time is also a relevant perspective related to determining relationships to adaptation in this study. I defined the elapsed M&A time variable in months, derived from the merger announcement month and year data collected from the participant, compared to the month and year the data was collected for the study. I created diagrams illustrating the interactions between the moderator variable, and the independent and criterion variables in the study, and they are shown in Figures 2 through 5.
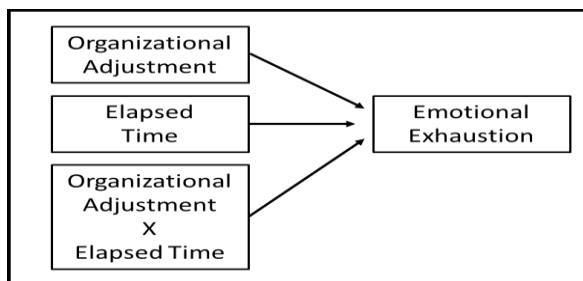
Figure 2. Interaction between Organizational Adjustment, Elapsed Time, and Emotional Exhaustion.
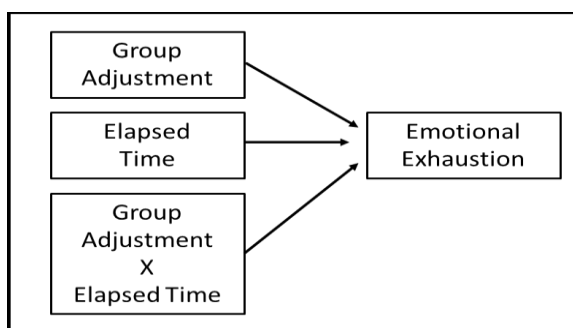
Figure 3. Interaction between Group Adjustment, Elapsed Time, and Emotional Exhaustion.
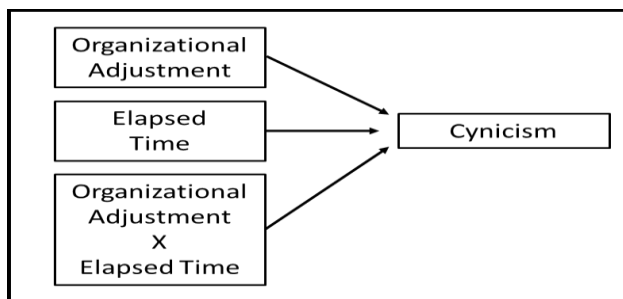
Figure 4. Interaction between Organizational Adjustment, Elapsed Time, and Cynicism.
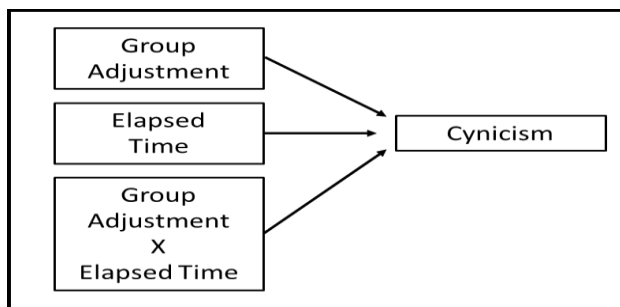
Figure 5. Interaction between Group Adjustment, Elapsed Time, and Cynicism.

Data analysis plan. I designed this quantitative study to evaluate the effects of newcomer adaptation, moderated by time, and operationalized as organizational adaptation and group adaptation. My intent was to determine if there were correlational or predictor relationships between the independent adjustment variables and the criterion variables, operationalized as emotional exhaustion and cynicism in a population of middle managers working in target organizations that are currently involved in or have been part of M&A transactions. The following research questions were hypothesized:

RQ1: To what extent was newcomer organizational adjustment, as measured by the Organizational Assimilation Index, and group adjustment, as measured by Belongingness at Work Scale, related to exhaustion, as measured by the MBI-GS in middle managers in the target organization of an M&A?

$H_0$1a: There was no significant relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager exhaustion.

H_a1a: There was a significant relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager exhaustion.

$H_0$1b: There was no significant relationship between group adjustment and middle manager exhaustion.

*H$_a$*1b: There was a significant relationship between group adjustment and middle

manager exhaustion.

RQ2: To what extent was newcomer organizational adjustment, as measured by

the Organizational Assimilation Index, and group adjustment, as measured by

Belongingness at Work Scale, related to cynicism, as measured by the MBI-GS in middle

managers in the target organization of an M&A?

*H$_0$*2a: There was no significant relationship between organizational adjustment

and middle manager cynicism.

*H$_a$*2a: There was a significant relationship between organizational adjustment and

middle manager cynicism.

*H$_0$*2b: There was no significant relationship between group adjustment and middle

manager cynicism.

*H$_a$*2b: There was a significant relationship between group adjustment and middle

manager cynicism.

RQ3: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was organizational adjustment a

significant predictor of exhaustion when controlling for group adjustment?

*H$_0$*3: Organizational adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager

exhaustion when controlling for the other variable.

*H$_a$*3: Organizational adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager

exhaustion when controlling for the other variable.

RQ4: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was group adjustment a significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion when controlling for organizational adjustment?

$H_0$4: Group adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion when controlling for the other variable.

H_a4: Group adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion when controlling for the other variable.

RQ5: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was organizational adjustment a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for group adjustment?

$H_0$5: Organizational adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

H_a5: Organizational adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

RQ6: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was group adjustment a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for organization adjustment?

$H_0$6: Group adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

H_a6: Group adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

RQ7: Did elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

$H_0 7$: Elapsed time was not a significant moderator between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion.

$H_a 7$: Elapsed time was a significant moderator between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion.

RQ8: Did elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

$H_0 8$: Elapsed time was not a significant moderator between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion.

$H_a 8$: Elapsed time was a significant moderator between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion.

RQ9: Did elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

$H_0 9$: Elapsed time was not a significant moderator between organizational adjustment and cynicism.

$H_a 9$: Elapsed time was a significant moderator between organizational adjustment and cynicism.

RQ10: Did elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between group adjustment and cynicism in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

$H_0$10: Elapsed time was not a significant moderator between group adjustment and cynicism.

H_a10: Elapsed time was a significant moderator between group adjustment and cynicism.

Confounding variables. Jager, Zoccali, MacLeod, and Dekker (2008) claimed that confounding variables can create bias in research studies by increasing variance (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2015). Frankfort-Nachmias and Leon Guerrero concurred and suggested that the effect of these variables can be controlled in research studies by adding them into regression analysis processes. Scholars have implemented variables such as age, gender, and management tenure as control variables in recent studies involving newcomer adaptation (Dunford et al., 2012; Kowatha, 2018; Madlock & Chory, 2014; Smith et al., 2017) and burnout (Guan et al., 2017; Kubayi, 2018; Lawrence et al., 2019; Mohr, Schult, & Osatuke, 2018; Xu, 2019). Thus, I included age, gender, and management tenure as control variables in this study to control potential bias and variance affecting the adjustment independent and burnout criterion variables.

I collected all data electronically, and for the instruments used to collect data on the independent and criterion variables, the responses were in a multiple-choice, Likert-like format. Responses were reviewed for completeness, and incomplete responses to the survey instrument questions were rejected. The SPSS statistical analysis program for

social science, provided by Walden University, was used to develop the results of the study. I conducted a reliability analysis on each of the instruments, and where possible, made the necessary adjustments to confirm the adequate reliability of each instrument. Means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations were considered for all variables in the study, with the correlation analysis providing a viewpoint into the strength of the relationships between variables. I used recommendations from Warner (2013), who stated that Cronbach's α coefficients of .70 or greater are acceptable.

I conducted a correlational analysis, analyzing the relationships between independent adjustment variables and criterion burnout variables. This analysis was used to determine the initial relationships between these variables (negative or positive) and the strengths of the relationships between each of the variables. To prepare for further evaluations, a series of statistical assumptions were completed to examine linear relationships between variables, including multicollinearity, normality, linearity, homoscedasticity analyses. To test the formal study hypotheses appropriately, I conducted multiple linear regression analysis, including analysis with and without the moderator variable. This examination determined the strength and statistical significance of the independent adjustment variables in predicting the various dimensions of burnout, as well as determining if there was a significant interaction present related to elapsed time. The F value statistics were used determine the fit of the model and if alterations were necessary. Likewise, I paid special attention to *p* values that were less .05 and .01, again signaling strong relationships among variables (see Warner, 2013).

Threats to Validity

I identified several potential validity issues associated with this study. The first threat to validity was the use of a convenience sample. To identify a population, which I considered to be hard or expensive to locate, I used a convenience sampling procedure through the AMT platform. While this approach is known as a nonprobability sampling approach (see Babbie, 2017), using this procedure to facilitate the sampling process can limit the generalizability of the study (Frankfort-Nachmias, & Leon-Guerrero, 2015). Additionally, while many convenience sampling approaches require a self-selection process, AMT was no different. Hulland and Miller (2018) argued that since individuals are compensated on AMT for the work they complete, they may be motivated to misrepresent themselves. To overcome this bias, I provided nominal compensation, equal to a reasonable minimum wage for the estimated time spent responding to the survey. Likewise, in an attempt to identify workers on the AMT platform, screening questions that clearly outlined the type of participant required for the study were defined as part of the AMT HIT. Moreover, while Peer et al. (2017) found some cheating among online workers in their study, they did not find, on average, that AMT workers were much more dishonest than study participants using similar online convenience sampling platforms. Furthermore, although Cheung et al. (2017) argued there are a number of validity concerns when using AMT, many of these concerns are comparable to other convenience sampling approaches, whether the data collection is completed online or by alternative means. Those validity issues and subsequent mitigation strategies are outlined and further examined in the following pages.

The use of self-reporting was also a potential threat to the validity of the study, especially if participants come to understand the underlying theoretical framework used in the study. Such a bias, known as social desirability bias, could provide either over or under-reported responses based on what participants might believe the researcher wants to hear (Althubaiti, 2016; Lavrakas, 2008). Likewise, J. Kim et al. (2013) argued that participants may over-report responses if they are particularly frustrated with or overwhelmed by the changes or pace of change within their respective organizations or workgroups or if the changes are causing heightened levels of stress for them at work or in their personal lives (see Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Another potential bias in self-reporting is known as recall bias and can emerge when a respondent must consider their response based on past events (Althubaiti, 2016). Although burnout is considered a chronic syndrome, emerging over time because of ongoing work stress, an individual may not be able to adequately recall this journey, particularly if a sudden stressful work event materializes while they are participating in the study. Such an event, although difficult to predict at any given time, could stimulate immediate feelings of being exhausted or cynical thoughts or behavior (Maslach & Leiter, 1997), resulting in the potential of over-reporting. Research participants may also become conflicted between responding accurately and overcoming fears associated with retribution from organizational members.

I incorporated the following strategies to mitigate these threats. The use of standardized, valid, and reliable instrumentation was meant to overcome these types of biases. Additionally, information on the importance and value of the research was

provided to assist the participant in understanding the significance of accurate, honest, and truthful responses. Likewise, although the survey instruments were not changed from prescribed wording, the format of measurement instruments was developed and delivered in such a way that the individual could not connect specific questions to the underlying theoretical framework. Privacy was of the utmost importance in protecting the anonymity of participants, with the specific approaches and measures suggested and further discussed in the ethics section.

I designed a moderator variable and included a series of control variables in this study. The addition of these variables into the research design was meant to acknowledge that other variables, if not accounted for, could contribute to bias and additional variance affecting the independent and criterion variables, and thus, the outcome of the study. I developed the study as a nonexperimental study, and although I anticipated that correlational or predictive relationships would emerge from the data, I did not anticipate causation as an anticipated outcome (Frankfort-Nachmias & Leon-Guerrero, 2015), and this was a known limitation of the study.

Ethical Considerations

Specific ethical considerations acknowledged in the study are outlined here, along with suggested mitigation approaches. I considered this population might be vulnerable in one of two ways. Firstly, asking participants survey questions about their perspectives on newcomer adaptation and burnout may create psychological stress for them. This stress could be additional stress beyond what they are already dealing with or may create a psychologically stressful situation for them as they recall painful experiences required to

respond to the questionnaires. In a similar context, yet different from psychological stress, the same survey questions may raise fears in the form of retribution from coworkers or direct supervisors. Participants may become stressed over the fear of potential economic loss in the form of future promotions or even job loss, or damage to their professional reputation should their participation in the research or responses to survey questions become known. In an attempt to alleviate these concerns, the invitation, and the informed consent form included information emphasizing the anonymity of the individual. Likewise, an email address was not required to access the questionnaires in SurveyMonkey, and participants were not asked to identify themselves personally within AMT, the AMT HIT, or SurveyMonkey. I coded the data with an assigned number that only related to the response and not to the individual who provided it. There was no intended follow-up for this quantitative study; thus, all email addresses used for correspondence with the participants from the AMT HIT were held separately from the data collection, and access was managed through a password-protected PC.

I was the only one who had access to the PC password, the protected files on that machine, and I personally managed a key to the locked cabinet in the case of printed materials. Data will be held under the aforementioned security measures for a period of 5 years and disposed of in accordance with ethical procedures for the destruction of research data as prescribed by Walden University. Consequently, after a thorough review of the study design and the documented approach outlined to address the aforementioned ethical issues, the Walden University internal review board approved the study. The

Walden University approval number for this study is 09-02-02-050250, which expires on September 1, 2021.

Bartel-Sheehan (2018) argued that when using an online crowdsourcing platform, such as AMT, ethical issues arise when researchers do not reasonably compensate workers for their time. To avoid such an ethical challenge when using AMT, Bartel-Sheehan suggested that a best practice is to compensate workers in the form of a reasonable minimum wage based on the estimated time required to complete the survey. I estimated the study took 10 to 15 minutes to complete and based on the current Minnesota minimum wage of $9.86 per hour, I determined that $2.50 was reasonable compensation for the workers who successfully completed the study survey. Thus, this minimal compensation was offered as part of the AMT HIT and paid to the online workers who completed the survey.

Summary

In chapter 3, I outlined the proposed research design and methodology for this quantitative study. The research questions and hypothesis statements were reiterated, along with the sampling procedures and the definitions of the population targeted for the study. I examined and explained the instrumentation used to collect data on the independent and criterion variables, including a detailed analysis of psychometric properties for each instrument. Likewise, the rationale for the introduction of a moderator variable and a group of commonly used control variables was described. Threats to validity and ethical considerations were discussed.

In chapter 4, I will conduct the examination of the data for each research question and evaluate the results of the testing. In preparation for more detailed evaluations, I will provide examinations to include a reliability analysis of the instrumentation, a summary of descriptive statistics, and the assessment of a variety of statistical assumptions used to validate data for linear regression analysis. Basic statistical analysis techniques, such as correlational analysis and multiple linear regression analysis, will be used to investigate specific research questions. Detailed findings will be documented and discussed in response to each research question.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

I designed this quantitative study to evaluate the effects of newcomer adaptation over time on the construct of burnout in middle managers working in a target organization of an M&A. Therefore, the research questions were focused on both the relationships between newcomer adaptation and burnout and whether or not these adjustment factors predicted burnout in this population. Likewise, time, operationalized as the years and months from the merger announcement, was also introduced as a moderator variable to evaluate possible interactions between newcomer adaptation and burnout. I conceptualized the independent variables supporting newcomer adaptation in this study as organizational adjustment and group adjustment. The criterion variables were two dimensions from the burnout construct, exhaustion and cynicism, with a moderator variable defined as elapsed MA time. The following research questions are hypothesized.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

RQ1: To what extent was newcomer organizational adjustment, as measured by the Organizational Assimilation Index, and group adjustment, as measured by Belongingness at Work Scale, related to exhaustion, as measured by the MBI-GS in middle managers in the target organization of an M&A?

$H_0$1a: There was no significant relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager exhaustion.

H_a1a: There was a significant relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager exhaustion.

$H_0$1b: There was no significant relationship between group adjustment and middle manager exhaustion.

H_a1b: There was a significant relationship between group adjustment and middle manager exhaustion.

RQ2: To what extent was newcomer organizational adjustment, as measured by the Organizational Assimilation Index, and group adjustment, as measured by Belongingness at Work Scale, related to cynicism, as measured by the MBI-GS in middle managers in the target organization of an M&A?

$H_0$2a: There was no significant relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager cynicism.

H_a2a: There was a significant relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager cynicism.

$H_0$2b: There was no significant relationship between group adjustment and middle manager cynicism.

H_a2b: There was a significant relationship between group adjustment and middle manager cynicism.

RQ3: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was organizational adjustment a significant predictor of exhaustion when controlling for group adjustment?

$H_0$3: Organizational adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion when controlling for the other variable.

*H*_a3: Organizational adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager

exhaustion when controlling for the other variable.

RQ4: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was group adjustment a

significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion when controlling for organizational

adjustment?

*H*₀4: Group adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager

exhaustion when controlling for the other variable.

*H*_a4: Group adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion

when controlling for the other variable.

RQ5: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was organizational adjustment a

significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for group adjustment?

*H*₀5: Organizational adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager

cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

*H*_a5: Organizational adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager

cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

RQ6: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was group adjustment a

significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for organization

adjustment?

*H*₀6: Group adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager

cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

*H*_a6: Group adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism

when controlling for the other variable.

H_a3: Organizational adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager

exhaustion when controlling for the other variable.

RQ4: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was group adjustment a

significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion when controlling for organizational

adjustment?

$H_0$4: Group adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager

exhaustion when controlling for the other variable.

H_a4: Group adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion

when controlling for the other variable.

RQ5: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was organizational adjustment a

significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for group adjustment?

$H_0$5: Organizational adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager

cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

H_a5: Organizational adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager

cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

RQ6: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, was group adjustment a

significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for organization

adjustment?

$H_0$6: Group adjustment was not a significant predictor of middle manager

cynicism when controlling for the other variable.

H_a6: Group adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism

when controlling for the other variable.

RQ7: Did elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

$H_0$7: Elapsed time was not a significant moderator between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion.

H_a7: Elapsed time was a significant moderator between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion.

RQ8: Did elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

$H_0$8: Elapsed time was not a significant moderator between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion.

H_a8: Elapsed time was a significant moderator between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion.

RQ9: Did elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

$H_0$9: Elapsed time was not a significant moderator between organizational adjustment and cynicism.

H_a9: Elapsed time was a significant moderator between organizational adjustment and cynicism.

RQ10: Did elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between group adjustment and cynicism in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

$H_0$10: Elapsed time was not a significant moderator between group adjustment and cynicism.

H_a10: Elapsed time was a significant moderator between group adjustment and cynicism.

The chapter illustrates and discusses the results of the study. The recruitment strategies and the data collection process are presented. An explanation of the analysis of the data collected is discussed. A baseline statistical analysis and demographic analysis are examined, along with the statistical assumptions supporting further data analysis. The findings from the examination of the data relating to the research questions are presented and discussed.

Data Collection and Analysis

I collected data over a 2 week period using AMT as the recruiting strategy and an online survey using SurveyMonkey as the data collection mechanism. While the AMT workforce is essentially a crowdsourced population, the platform was configured to reach a specific population of middle managers in the United States for this project. Once the project was defined in the AMT HIT, I included the link to the SurveyMonkey survey. The survey included the consent form, the request for demographic information in support of the control variables, the organizationally-centric data that would define the elapsed time variable associated with the merger communication, and the survey

questions pertaining to organizational adjustment, group adjustment, emotional

exhaustion, and cynicism.

I collected a total of 220 survey responses. The data were examined for

completeness, and 26 blank responses were removed from the data set and further

evaluation. Of the remaining 194 records, five responses were missing both the

management tenure demographic data and the merger communication announcement

elapsed time data. An additional 23 responses were missing just the management tenure

data, and 21 were missing the merger communication announcement elapsed time data.

Participants determined either they did not want to supply that data or, in the case of the

merger announcement elapsed time data, perhaps they could not remember the date when

the merger was announced within their organization. All of these responses were left in

the data set, with the missing data coded according to SPSS procedures. Notwithstanding,

since 145 respondents completed all the survey questions, this outcome was within an

acceptable power range between 138 and 231 for the study.

I coded the data according to the requirements for each instrument. The subscale

responses for organizational adjustment were coded using a 7-point, Likert-like scale,

with scale anchors ranging from 1 - strongly disagree to 7 – strongly agree. There were

no reverse coded items. Following a recommended procedure (IBM Support, n.d.), the

group adjustment subscale was recoded from a 5-point, Likert-like scale to a 7-point

Likert-like scale, with scale anchors ranging from 1 – not at all to 7 – very much so.

Additionally, two items from that subscale were reverse coded. The subscale responses to

the MBI-GS were coded using a 7-point Likert-like scale, with scale anchors ranging

from 0 – Never to 6 – every day. The responses were not recoded, and this was a recommendation from the MBI-GS codebook (Schaufeli et al., 1996). No items were reverse coded.

Results of the Study

I completed the statistical analysis, including descriptive statistics, statistical assumptions, and results for the tests examining the research questions, and findings are presented in this section. Descriptive statistics analysis included an internal reliability analysis of the four subscales of the measurement instruments, a summary of means, standard deviations, and a frequency analysis. An overview of the demographic analysis of the data and a correlation analysis for all variables is provided. Tests evaluating the research questions included a correlational analysis, multiple linear regression analysis testing with organizational adjustment, group adjustment, emotional exhaustion, and cynicism, along with control variables operationalized as age, gender, and manager tenure are presented. Finally, multiple linear regression was used to formulate the moderating variable, conceptualized as the elapsed time from the merger announcement, and examine interactions between the adjustment and burnout factors. The results of this analysis are also presented.

Descriptive Statistics

Reliability Analysis

I performed an internal reliability analysis using Cronbach's Alpha on all four subscales used in the study. When I completed the Cronbach's Alpha analysis of the acculturation subscale, which measured organizational adjustment from the

Organizational Assimilation Index-Extended Version instrument (Gailliard et al., 2010a),

the alpha level for this subscale was .64, as shown in Table 1. My analysis indicated the

subscale did not have an adequate level of inter-item reliability. However, when

reviewing the data in Table 2, I concluded that deleting any of the items would not

significantly increase the alpha level. Thus, I considered the reliability analysis for this

instrument as a limitation in this study.

Table 1

Reliability Statistics-Organization Adjustment

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.640	4

Table 2

Item-Total Statistics-Organizational Adjustment

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Organizational Adjust Q1	17.50	7.081	.484	.523
Organizational Adjust Q2	17.10	9.405	.415	.583
Organizational Adjust Q3	17.01	8.829	.538	.516
Organizational Adjust Q4	17.78	7.821	.324	.664

When I completed the Cronbach's Alpha analysis of the belongingness subscale,

which measured group adjustment from the Belongingness at Work Scale instrument

(Den Hartog et al., 2007a), the alpha level for this subscale was .48, as shown in Table 3.

This examination indicates the subscale does not have an adequate level of inter-item

reliability. However, through further analysis, I determined that by removing the first

item in the scale, the alpha statistic improved to .69, which is just below an acceptable

threshold for this statistic (Table 4). Thus, I removed this item from further analysis,

leaving two items in the subscale. This decision was also considered a limitation in the

study.

Table 3

Reliability Statistics- Group Adjustment

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.487	3

Table 4

Item-Total Statistics- Group Adjustment

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Group Adjust Q1	9.431	12.690	.088	.699
Group Adjust Q2	9.562	7.481	.492	.017
Group Adjust Q3	9.322	8.653	.379	.251

Since the MBI-GS instrument (Schaufeli et al., 1996) has been widely used, I

anticipated that the Cronbach's Alpha statistic for the two subscales in this study would

be within an acceptable range. I found that for the Emotional Exhaustion subscale,

Cronbach's Alpha was .83, as shown in Table 5, while that statistic for the Cynicism

subscale was .74, as shown in Table 6. Both of these statistics indicate an acceptable level

of inter-item reliability for these two subscales (see Field, 2013).

Table 5

Reliability Statistics- Emotional Exhaustion

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.834	5

Table 6

Reliability Statistics- Cynicism

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.742	5

Demographic Analysis

Out of 220 survey responses, I identified 194 records that were useful. The final data set is comprised of 117 males (60%) and 77 females (40%). The average age of the total participant group was 36.2 years, with ages ranging from 21 to 73 years of age. The average middle manager tenure among the respondent group was six years, with years of tenure ranging from 1 to 25 years. The average elapsed M&A time, calculated in months, from when the merger was announced within the organization, was 21 months, with a range of 1 to 36 months.

The means and standard deviations for the emotional exhaustion, cynicism, organizational adjustment, and group adjustment variables are shown in Table 7. While Emotional Exhaustion scores ranged from 0 to 6, with an average of 2.50 (*SD*=1.42), Cynicism scores ranged from 0 to 6, with an average of 2.41 (*SD*=1.37). Likewise, although Organizational Adjustment scores ranged from 2.75 to 7, with an average of 5.78 (*SD*=.906), the Group Adjustment scores ranged from 1 to 7, with an average of 4.71 (*SD*=1.78). According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), higher scores indicate higher levels of burnout. On the other hand, higher organizational and group adjustment scores indicate higher levels of adjustment (Den Hartog et al., 2007b; Gailliard et al., 2010).

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for Age, Mgmt_Tenure, Elapsed_MA_Time, Emotional Exhaustion, Cynicism, Organizational Adjustment and Group Adjustment

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	194	21	73	36.19	10.56
Mgmt_Tenure	166	1	25.67	6.07	4.57
Elapsed_MA-Time	168	1	36	2.51	9.11
Emotional Ex	194	0	6	2.50	1.42
Cynicism	194	0	6	2.41	1.37
Organizational Adjust	194	2.75	7	5.78	.906
Group Adjust	194	1	7	4.71	1.78

I reviewed the correlations of all variables. While the relationship between age and management tenure was moderately positive, it was significant. Likewise, although the relationships between age, group adjustment, and emotional exhaustion were slightly positive, these relationships were also significant. On the other hand, while there were only minimal relationships between the elapsed MA time variable and other study variables, none were significant. As part of the evaluation of specific research questions, the relationships between the adjustment and burnout variables will be discussed later in the chapter.

Table 8

Correlational Relationship Matrix

		Age	Mgmt_Tenure	MA_Time	Org Adjust	Group Adjust	Emotional Ex	Cynicism
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.524**	.060	-.023	.185**	.150*	.091
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.441	.755	.010	.037	.207
	N	194	166	168	194	194	194	194
Mgmt_Tenure	Pearson Correlation	.524**	1	.012	.018	-.019	.097	.072
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.886	.817	.813	.214	.357
	N	166	166	145	166	166	166	166
Elapsed_MA_Time	Pearson Correlation	.060	.012	1	-.005	-.036	-117	.054
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.441	.886		.945	.641	.131	.485
	N	168	145	168	168	168	168	168
Org Adjust	Pearson Correlation	-.023	.018	-.005	1	.110	-.136	-.164*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.755	.817	.945		.126	.059	.023
	N	194	166	168	194	194	194	194
Group Adjust	Pearson Correlation	.185**	-.019	-.036	.110	1	-.393**	-.553**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.813	.641	.126		.000	.000
	N	194	166	168	194	194	194	194
Emotional Ex	Pearson Correlation	.150*	.097	-.117	-.136	-.393*	1	.699**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.037	.214	.131	.059	.000		.000
	N	194	166	168	194	194	194	194
Cynicism	Pearson Correlation	.091	.072	-.054	-.164*	-.533**	.699**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.207	.357	.485	.023	.000	.000	
	N	194	166	168	194	194	194	194

**.Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Statistical Assumptions

I used SPSS to evaluate various statistical assumptions for this study to determine if violations existed before examining the data using multiple regression analysis. Warner (2013) argued that testing these assumptions is recommended when considering the use of multiple regression techniques in a study and suggested that violating these assumptions can create limitations in the study. Thus, the following tests were conducted including (a) multicollinearity, (b) normality, (c) linearity, and (d) homoscedasticity.

Multicollinearity Analysis

Multicollinearity is a situation whereby the independent variables are highly

related to one another, and thus, can negatively affect the regression model (Warner,

2013). Variance inflation factors (VIF) were evaluated to test multicollinearity. If the VIF

values are below 3, then multicollinearity is generally not a problem (see Field, 2013). As

shown in Table 9, the VIF values for all independent variables are below 3, and thus, the

multicollinearity assumption is not violated.

Table 9

Multicollinearity Statistics: VIF Scores for Age, Mgmt_Tenure, MA_Time,
Organizational Adjustment, and Group Adjustment

	Tolerance	VIF
Age	.672	1.489
Mgmt_Tenure	.712	1.404
MA_Time	.993	1.007
Organizational Adjust	.998	1.057
Group Adjust	.988	1.120

Normality Analysis

The normality of data means that the sample used for a study reasonably

represents the normal population distribution (Warner, 2013) and is critical for examining

the data using regression analysis techniques. To test this assumption, I created Q-Q plots

for each variable. As shown in Figures 6 through 12, except for the management tenure

control variable, the assumption of normality in the data was validated.
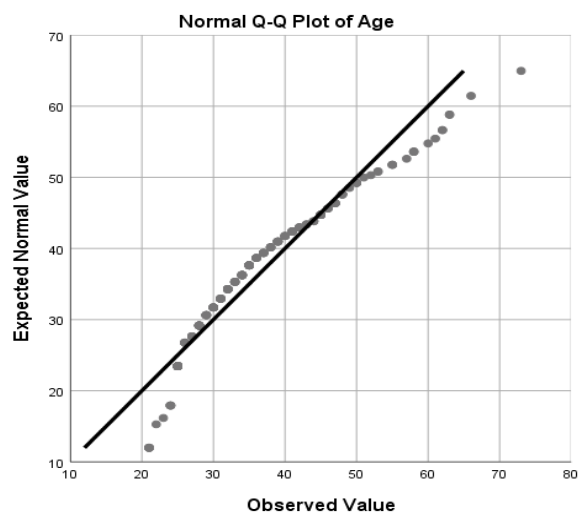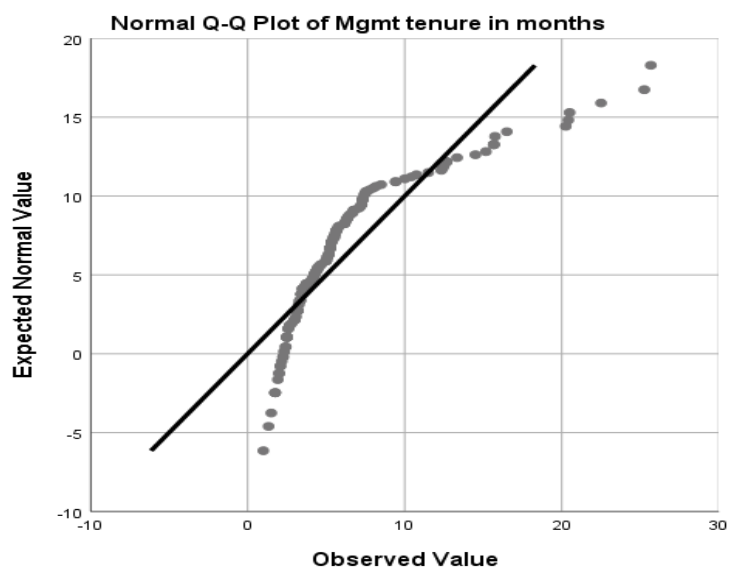
Figure 6. Age Q-Q Plot.

Figure 7. Mgmt_Tenure Q-Q Plot.
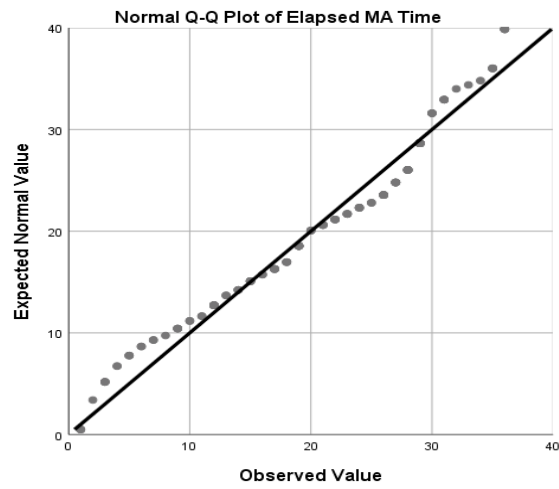
Figure 8. Elapsed_MA_Time Q-Q Plot.
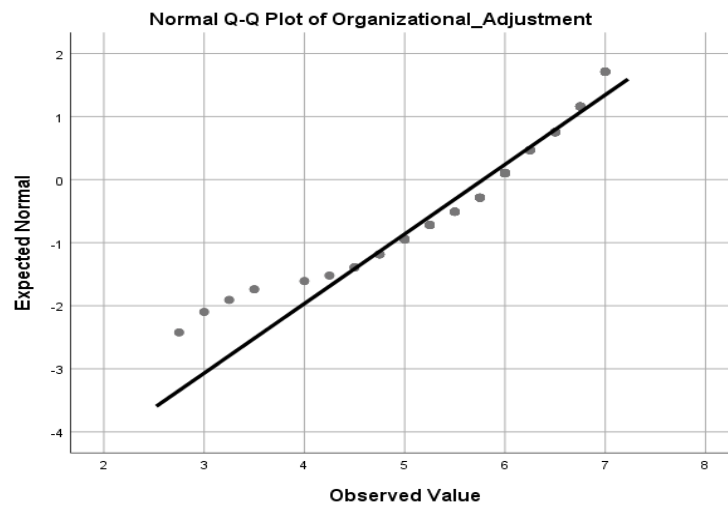
Figure 9. Organizational Adjustment Q-Q Plot.
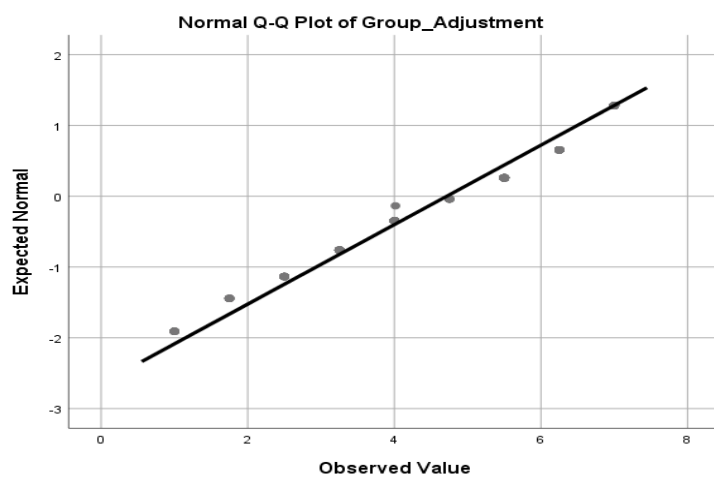
Figure 10. Group Adjustment Q-Q Plot.
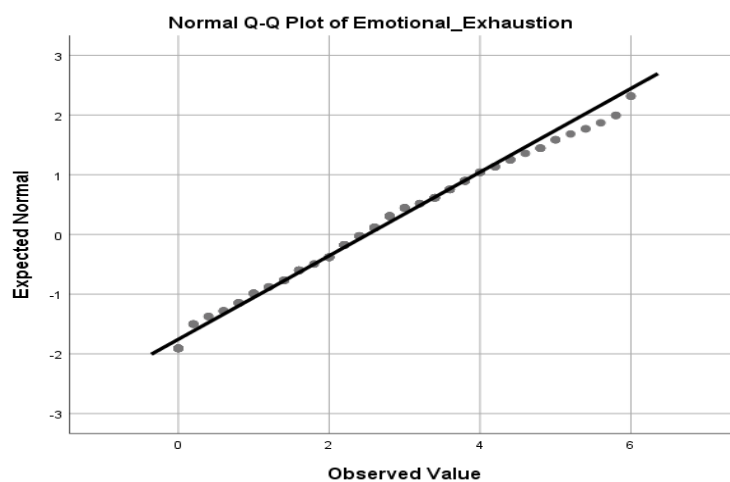
Figure 11. Emotional Exhaustion Q-Q Plot.
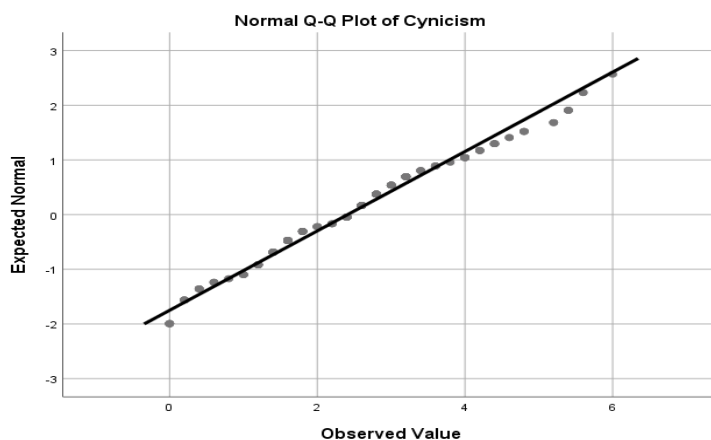
Figure 12. Cynicism Q-Q Plot.

Linearity Analysis

The assumption of linearity in a data set means that the relationship between the independent and dependent variables are linear, formulating a straight line (Warner, 2013). Warner argued that these diagrams should not show curvature, which indicates the data are normally distributed. I used SPSS to prepare Normal Probability Plots to examine linearity, and when I visually inspected these diagrams, I found that this assumption was not violated. Figures 13 through 22 present the residual scatterplots for the independent and each of the dependent variables.
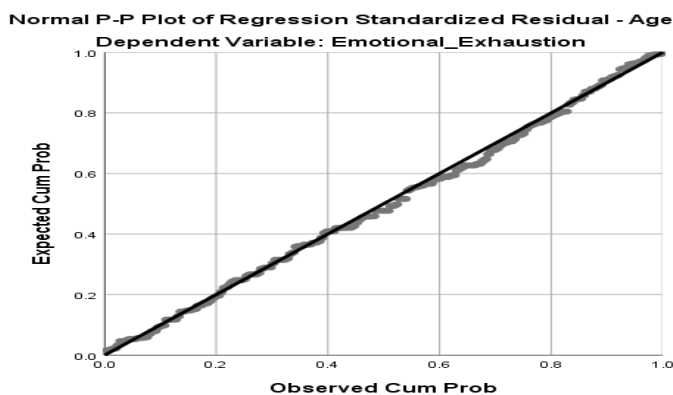
Figure 13. Normal P-P Plot for Age and Emotional Exhaustion.
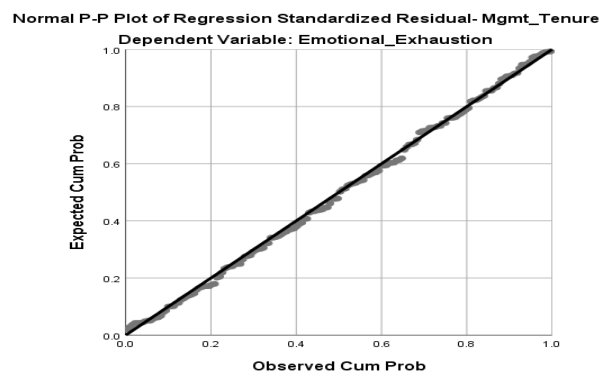
Figure 14. Normal P-P Plot for Mgmt_Tenure and Emotional Exhaustion.
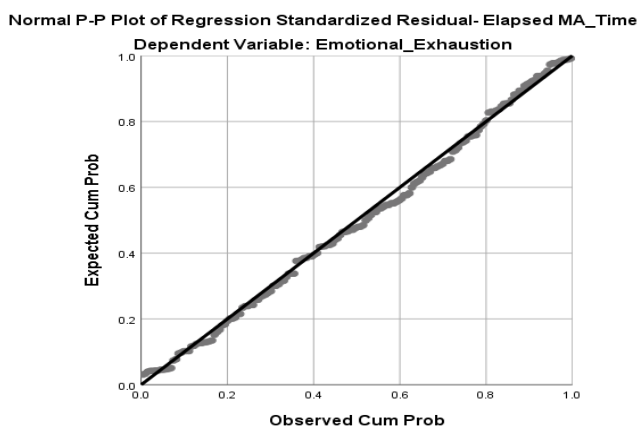
Figure 15. Normal P-P Plot for Elapsed_MA_Time and Emotional Exhaustion.
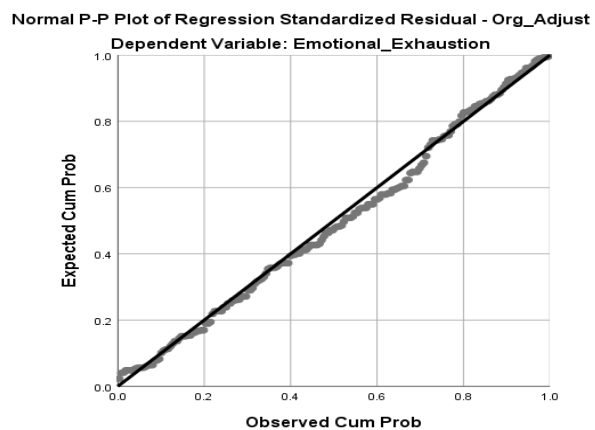
Figure 16. Normal P-P Plot for Organizational Adjustment and Emotional Exhaustion.
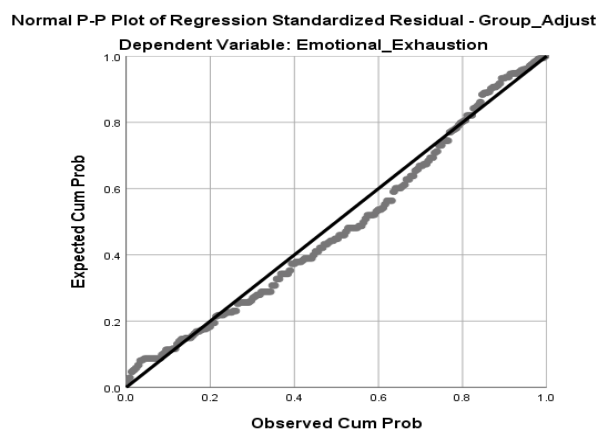
Figure 17. Normal P-P Plot for Group Adjustment and Emotional Exhaustion.
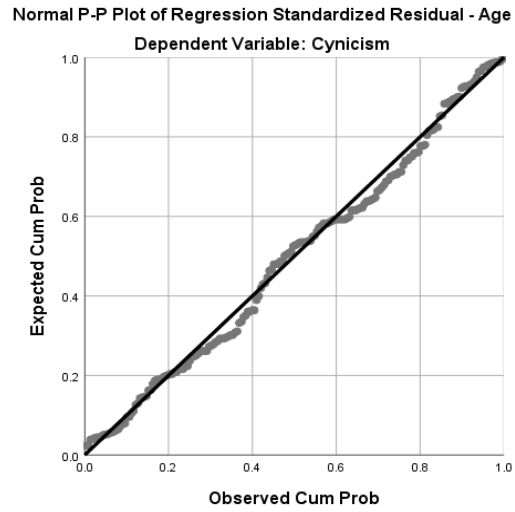
Figure 18. Normal P-P Plot for Age and Cynicism.
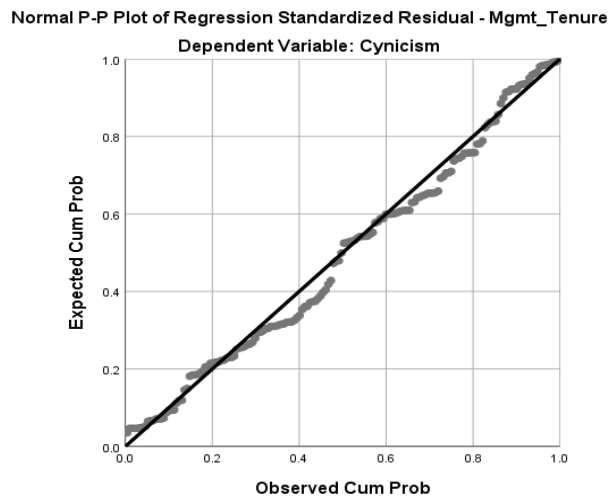
Figure 19. Normal P-P Plot for Mgmt_Tenure and Cynicism.

Figure 20. Normal P-P Plot for Elapsed_MA_Time and Cynicism.
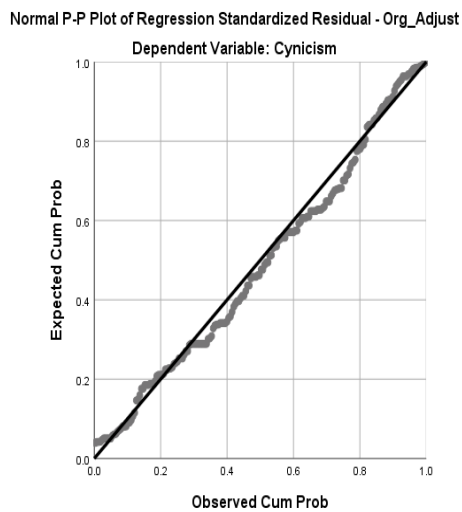
Figure 21. Normal P-P Plot for Organizational Adjustment and Cynicism.

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual - Group_Adjust
Dependent Variable: Cynicism
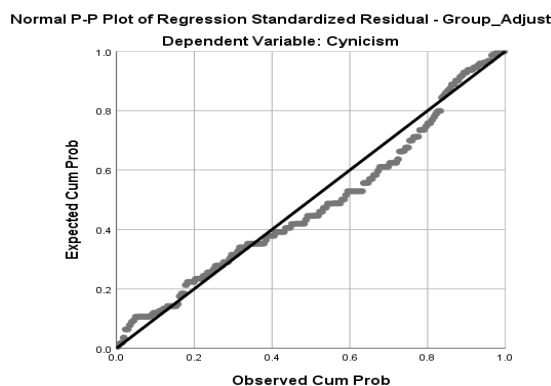
Figure 22. Normal P-P Plot for Group Adjustment and Cynicism.

Homoscedasticity Analysis

The assumption of homoscedasticity evaluates the error distribution within the data, with the variances being equally distributed across the data (see Warner, 2013). Standardized residual plots for each independent and dependent variable were developed and examined for this analysis and are shown in Figures 23 to 32. I performed a visual examination of these plots and found that some heteroscedasticity exists between some variables. For instance, the standardized residuals for age and emotional exhaustion, and management tenure and emotional exhaustion appear to be less evenly distributed. The same outcome was visualized for organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion, but less so. Likewise, the same result appears to occur for age and cynicism, management tenure and cynicism, and organizational adjustment and cynicism. Thus, I acknowledged that these relationships somewhat violate this assumption, which was considered a limitation in this study.
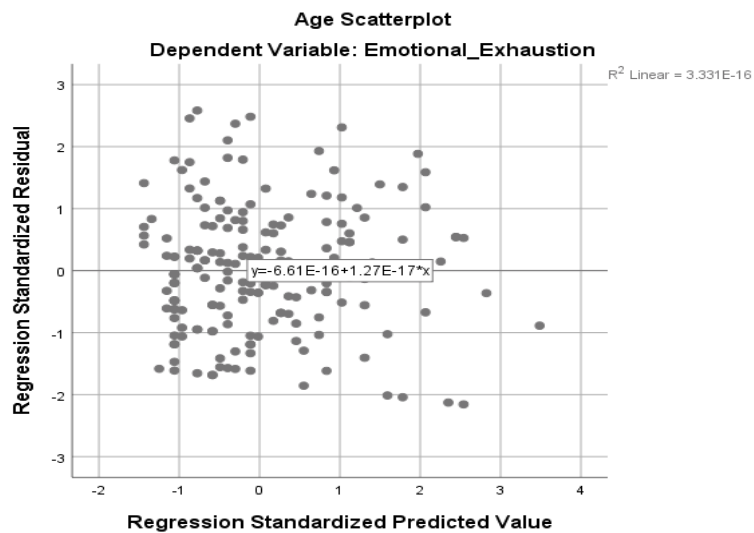
Figure 23. Standardized Residual Plot for Age and Emotional Exhaustion.
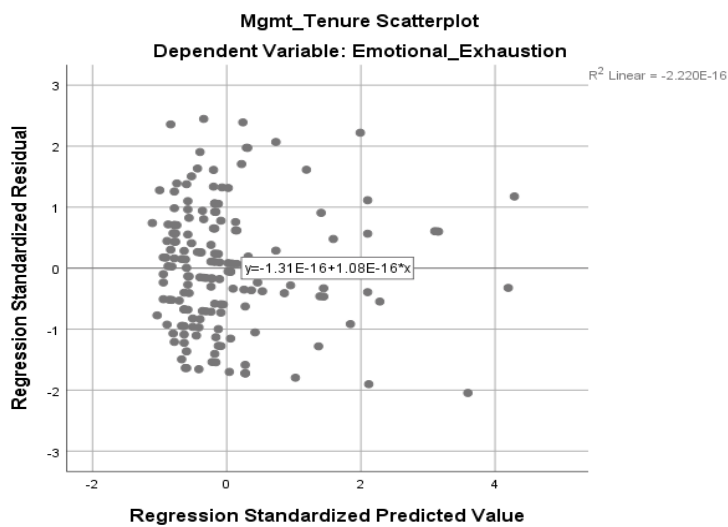
Figure 24. Standardized Residual Plot for Mgmt_Tenure and Emotional Exhaustion.
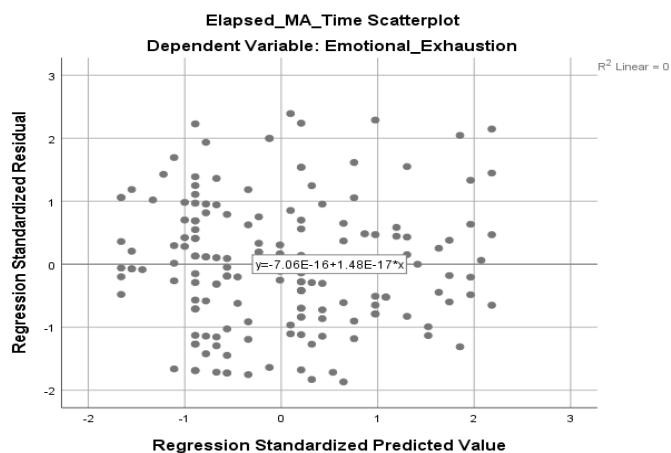
Figure 25. Standardized Residual Plot for Elapsed_MA_Time and Emotional Exhaustion.
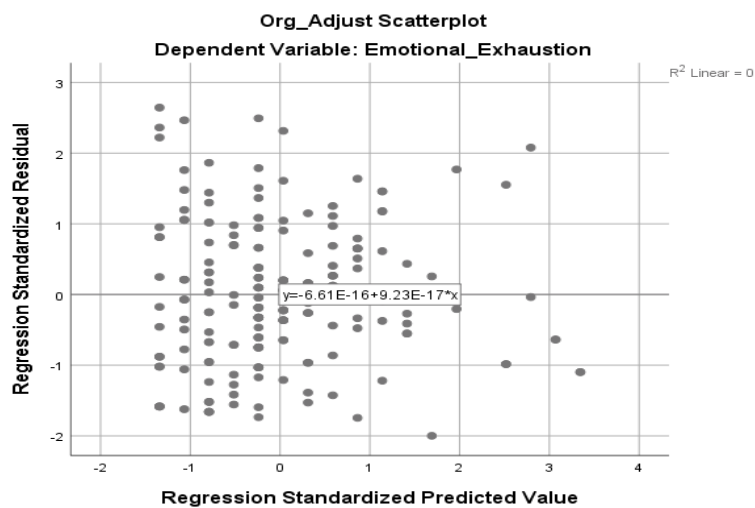
Figure 26. Standardized Residual Plot for Organizational Adjustment and Emotional Exhaustion.
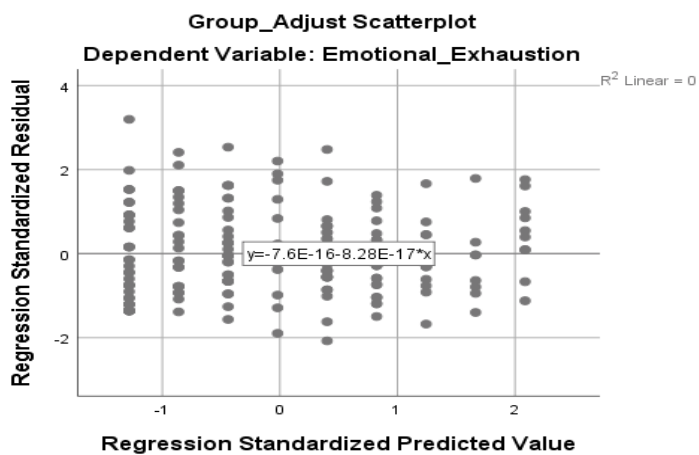
Figure 27. Standardized Residual Plot for Group Adjustment and Emotional Exhaustion.
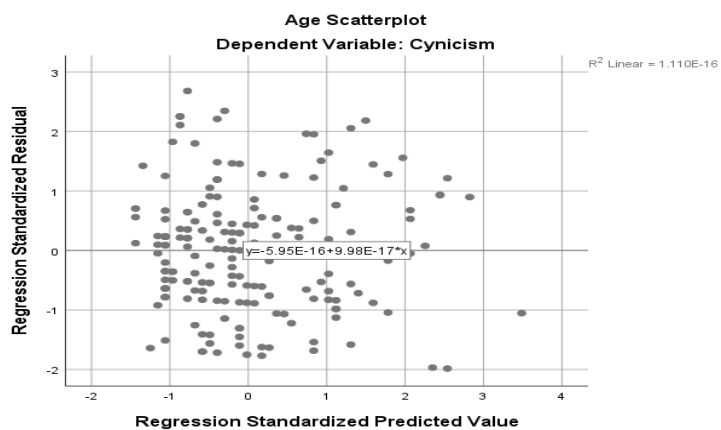
Figure 28. Standardized Residual Plot for Age and Cynicism.
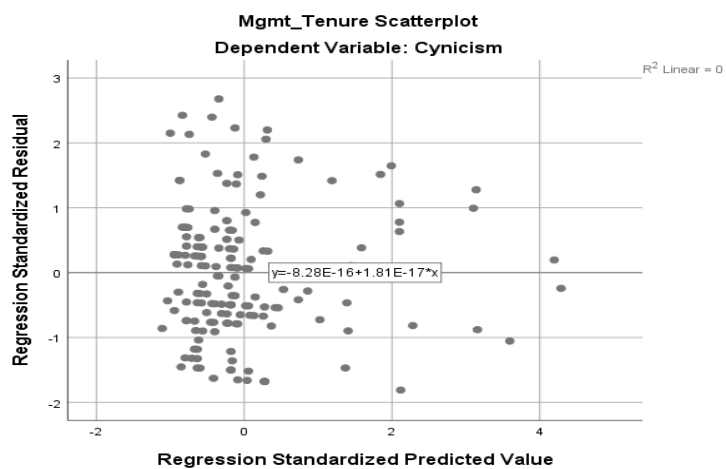
Figure 29. Standardized Residual Plot for Mgmt_Tenure and Cynicism.
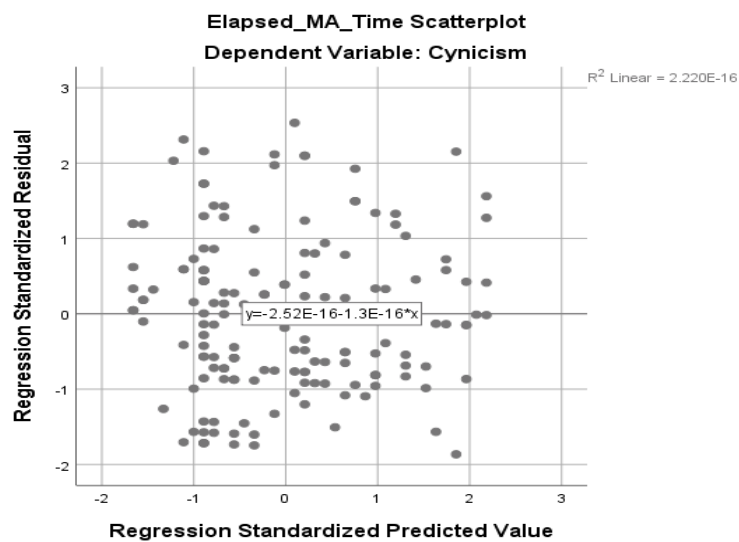
Figure 30. Standardized Residual Plot for Elapsed_MA_Time and Cynicism.
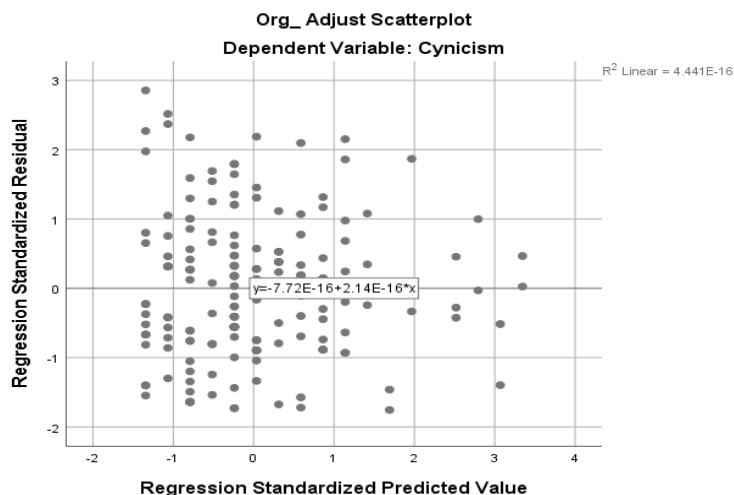
Figure 31. Standardized Residual Plot for Organizational Adjustment and Cynicism.
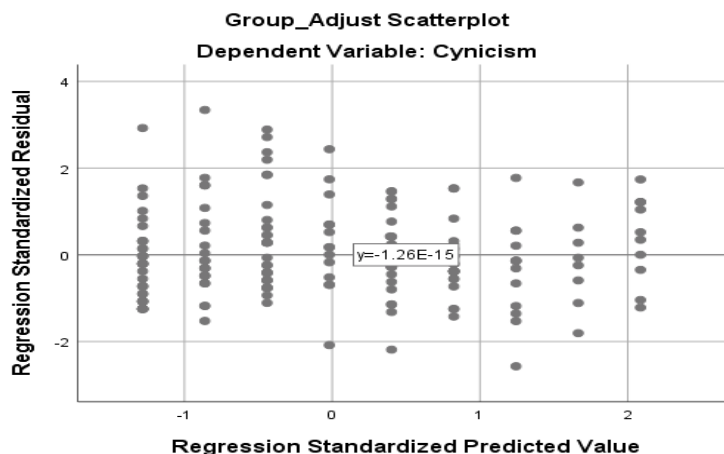
Figure 32. Standardized Residual Plot for Group Adjustment and Cynicism.

Detailed Results

Having completed the descriptive statistics analysis and validated the statistical

assumptions, I performed a series of tests to investigate the research questions posited in

this study. The detailed analysis evaluated the relationships between the two adjustment

variables serving as independent variables, and emotional exhaustion and cynicism

serving as the criterion variables, and whether the adjustment independent variables could predict either of the two factors of burnout. Additionally, the intervening variable of elapsed time from the merger announcement was evaluated to determine if that variable moderated the relationships between the adjustment and burnout factors.

Relationships Between Adjustment and Burnout Factors

The first two research questions I examined were focused on the relationships between the independent variables, conceptualized as organizational adjustment and group adjustment, and the factors of burnout, emotional exhaustion, and cynicism.

RQ1: To what extent is newcomer organizational adjustment, as measured by the Organizational Assimilation Index, and group adjustment, as measured by Belongingness at Work Scale, related to exhaustion, as measured by the MBI-GS in middle managers in the target organization of an M&A?

RQ2: To what extent is newcomer organizational adjustment, as measured by the Organizational Assimilation Index, and group adjustment, as measured by Belongingness at Work Scale, related to cynicism, as measured by the MBI-GS in middle managers in the target organization of an M&A?

I completed Pearson's correlational analysis to evaluate these relationships and determine the significance and strength of the relationships (Table 10). I found that while the relationship between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion was small and negative, it was not significant, $r(192) = -.136$, $p = .059$, meaning that as organizational adjustment increases slightly among middle managers, emotional exhaustion decreases, or the other way around. On the other hand, I found that while the

relationship between middle manager group adjustment and emotional exhaustion was a moderate negative relationship, it was significant, $r(192) = -.393, p < .001$, inferring that as group adjustment increases, emotional exhaustion goes down or improves. The relationship could also mean that as group adjustment decreases, emotional exhaustion increases. Since there was no significant relationship between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion, yet there was a significant relationship between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion, RQ1 was only partially supported. Thus, I failed to reject the null hypothesis ($H_0$1a), which states that there is no significant relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager emotional exhaustion. Conversely, I rejected the alternate hypothesis (H_a1a), which states that there is a significant relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager exhaustion. On the other hand, I rejected the null hypothesis ($H_0$1b), which states there is no significant relationship between group adjustment and middle manager emotional exhaustion. Subsequently, I failed to reject the alternate hypothesis (H_a1b), which states there is a significant relationship between those two variables.

Moreover, I determined that the relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism was small and negative, yet significant, $r(192) = -.164, p = .023$, meaning that as organizational adjustment increases, cynicism decreases slightly within this group of middle managers. I also concluded that as organizational adjustment decreases, cynicism is worse. On the other hand, I found the relationship between group adjustment and cynicism was a moderate, negative relationship, and was also significant, $r(192) = -.553, p < .001$. Thus, I inferred that as group adjustment increases, cynicism decreases

significantly among middle managers or vice versa. Since there were statistically

significant relationships between organizational adjustment and group adjustment and

cynicism, although the relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism was

small, RQ2 was supported. Thus, I rejected the null hypotheses ($H_0$2a and $H_0$2b), which

state that organizational adjustment and group adjustment are not significantly related to

cynicism. On the other hand, I failed to reject the alternate hypotheses (H_a2a and H_a2b),

which state that there is a significant relationship between organizational and group

adjustment and cynicism.

Table 10

Correlational Relationships between Adjustment Variables and Burnout Factors.

		Org Adjust	Group Adjust	Emotional Ex	Cynicism
Org Adjust	Pearson Correlation	1	.110	-.136	-.164*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.126	.059	.023
	N	194	194	194	194
Group Adjust	Pearson Correlation	.110	1	-.393**	-.553**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.126		.000	.000
	N	194	194	194	194
Emotional Ex	Pearson Correlation	-.136	-.393*	1	.699**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.059	.000		.000
	N	194	194	194	194
Cynicism	Pearson Correlation	-.164*	-.553**	.699**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.023	.000	.000	
	N	194	194	194	194

**.Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)
*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

Adjustment Variables Predicting Burnout Factors

Multiple linear regression analysis allows researchers to test the predictive

relationships between multiple independent variables and one criterion variable (see

Cronk, 2016). Therefore, I used this approach to analyze whether the independent variables, conceptualized as organizational adjustment and group adjustment, predicted burnout, conceptualized as emotional exhaustion and cynicism, which are the next four research questions. In addition to the independent and criterion variables, age, gender, and management tenure, serving as control variables, were also added into this examination.

I conducted the first multiple regression evaluation to determine if, within target organizations of M&A scenarios, organizational and group adjustment were significant predictors of emotional exhaustion among middle managers. Therefore, the following research questions were examined in this evaluation. Likewise, the results of the analysis are presented in Tables 11, 12, and 13.

RQ3: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, is organizational adjustment a significant predictor of exhaustion when controlling for group adjustment?

RQ4: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, is group adjustment a significant predictor of middle manager exhaustion when controlling for organizational adjustment?

I examined the results of the multiple regression analysis and found that the model testing organizational adjustment and group adjustment as predictors of emotional exhaustion was significant, $F(5, 160) = 10.305$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .24$ (Table 11 and Table 12). The coefficient of determination, known as the R^2 value, was .24. Therefore, I concluded that 24% of the variance in the emotional exhaustion scores was accounted for based on the set of predictors in the model, including age, gender, management tenure, organizational adjustment, and group adjustment. Furthermore, I determined that this

implies there were other factors affecting emotional exhaustion scores among the population of middle managers in this study. Moreover, while I found that as organizational adjustment changes, emotional exhaustion decreases, this variable was not a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion among this group of middle managers, $\beta = -.109$, $p = .322$ (Table 13). Thus, I failed to reject the null hypothesis (H_03), which states that organizational adjustment is not a significant predictor of middle manager emotional exhaustion. Conversely, I rejected the alternate hypothesis (H_a3), which states that organizational adjustment is a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion.

I found that group adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager emotional exhaustion, $\beta = -.349$, $p < .001$ (Table 13), meaning that as group adjustment changes, emotional exhaustion decreases among this participant group. Therefore, I rejected the null hypothesis (H_04) that states that group adjustment is not a significant predictor of middle manager emotional exhaustion. On the other hand, I failed to reject the alternate hypothesis (H_a4), which states that group adjustment is a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion.

Table 11

Regression Model Summary for Predictors of Emotional Exhaustion.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.494[a]	.244	.220	1.26

a. Predictors: (Constant), Group Adjust, Mgmt_Tenure, Gender, Org Adjust, age

Table 12

ANOVA Summary for Predictors of Emotional Exhaustion

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	82.001	5	16.400	10.305	.000[a]
1	Residual	254.636	160	1.591		
	Total	336.637	165			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Mgmt_Tenure, Org Adjust, Group Adjust

Table 13

Standardized Regression Coefficients for Emotional Exhaustion

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	3.940	.742		5.307	.000
	Age	.033	.011	.247	2.970	.003
	Gender	-.508	.201	-.175	-2.528	.012
1	Mgmt_Tenure	-.009	.026	-.030	-.362	.718
	Org Adjust	-.109	.110	-.069	-.993	.322
	Group Adjust	-.349	.057	-.435	-6.115	.000

I conducted the second multiple regression evaluation to determine if, within a target organization of M&A scenarios, organizational and group adjustment were significant predictors of cynicism among middle managers. Therefore, the following research questions were examined in this evaluation. Likewise, the results of the analysis are presented in Tables 14, 15, and 16.

RQ5: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, is organizational adjustment a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for group adjustment?

RQ6: In target organizations of M&A scenarios, is group adjustment a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism when controlling for organization adjustment?

I examined the results of the multiple regression analysis and found that the model testing organizational adjustment and group adjustment as predictors of cynicism was significant, $F(5, 160) = 19.433$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .38$ (Table 14 and Table 15). The coefficient of determination, or the R^2 value, was .38. I concluded that this infers that 38% of the variance in the cynicism scores was accounted for based on the set of predictors in the model, including age, gender, management tenure, organizational adjustment, and group adjustment. Likewise, I determined that this meant other factors were affecting the cynicism scores among the population of middle managers in this study. Furthermore, while I found that as organizational adjustment changes, cynicism decreases slightly, this variable was not a significant predictor of cynicism among this group of middle managers, $\beta = -.054$, $p = .595$. Thus, I have failed to reject the null hypothesis (H_05), which states that organizational adjustment is not a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism. Conversely, I rejected the alternate hypothesis (H_a5), which states that organizational adjustment is a significant predictor of cynicism.

I discovered that group adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism, $\beta = -.454$, $p < .001$ (Table 16), which means that as group adjustment changes, cynicism decreases among this participant group. Therefore, I rejected the null hypothesis (H_06), which states that group adjustment is not a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism. Subsequently, I failed to reject the alternate hypothesis (H_a6), which states that group adjustment is a significant predictor of cynicism.

Table 14

Regression Model Summary for Predictors of Cynicism

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.615[a]	.378	.358	1.11419

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Mgmt_Tenure, Org Adjust, Group Adjust

Table 15

ANOVA Summary for Predictors of Cynicism

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	120.621	5	24.124	19.433	.000[a]
	Residual	198.627	160	1.241		
	Total	319.248	165			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Mgmt_Tenure, Org Adjust, Group Adjust

Table 16

Standardized Regression Coefficients for Cynicism

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.184	.686		6.103	.000
	Age	.031	.010	.235	3.081	.002
	Gender	-.696	.178	-.248	-3.921	.000
	Mgmt_Tenure	-.014	.023	-.048	-.641	.523
	Org Adjust	-.054	.102	-.034	-.533	.595
	Group Adjust	-.454	.052	-.573	-8.746	.000

Effects of Time

I performed the analysis of the moderation variable in three steps. The first step was to evaluate a multiple linear regression model by adding the elapsed MA time variable, conceptualized as the elapsed time between the merger announcement and the

date of the study, as an independent variable, along with the appropriate adjustment variable, predicting the burnout factors. Next, I used two procedures to analyze whether the moderator variable affected the relationships between organizational adjustment and group adjustment and burnout, conceptualized as emotional exhaustion and cynicism. The first procedure entailed formulating the interaction variable between elapsed MA time and each independent adjustment variable using SPSS methods. The second procedure used the Process Macro analysis as defined by Hayes (2018). Additionally, according to Warner (2013), it is customary to transform the independent variables through centering the score, so this exercise was completed for each independent variable before developing the moderation regression models. In addition to the independent and criterion variables, age, gender, and tenure, serving as control variables, were also added into this examination. This analysis tested the last four research questions.

RQ7: Does elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

RQ8: Does elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

RQ9: Does elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

RQ10: Does elapsed time from the merger communication moderate the relationship between group adjustment and cynicism in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios?

In the first analysis, I examined whether elapsed MA time from the merger communication moderated the relationship between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios. (RQ7). I began the examination by evaluating the predictive relationships between elapsed MA time and organizational adjustment related to emotional exhaustion. I evaluated the results of the regression analysis and found that the model was significant, $F(5, 138) = 3.607$, $p = .004$, $R^2 = .12$. I determined the R^2 value in this model was .12, meaning that approximately 12% of the variation in emotional exhaustion scores was accounted for by the set of predictors in the model, including age, gender, management tenure, elapsed MA time, and organizational adjustment. Furthermore, although I found that as elapsed MA time changes, emotional exhaustion decreases slightly, this variable was not a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion, $\beta = -.022$, $p = .080$. However, I found that organizational adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager emotional exhaustion, $\beta = -.317$, $p = .019$, and concluded that as organizational adjustment changes, burnout decreases among this group of middle managers.

In step two, I examined the multiple regression model results from the two procedures used to evaluate the interaction between elapsed time, organizational adjustment, and emotional exhaustion (Tables 17 through 19). I found that both the regression model crafted in SPSS and the one developed using the Process Macro (Hayes,

2018) were significant, $F(6, 138) = 3.017$, $p = .008$, $R^2 = .12$ (Tables 17 and 18).

Likewise, I concluded that approximately 12% of the variance in the emotional

exhaustion scores was accounted for by the predictors in the model, including age,

gender, management tenure, elapsed MA time, and organizational adjustment. Therefore,

I continued examining the regression analysis to determine the significance of the elapsed

MA time variable moderating the relationship between organizational adjustment and

emotional exhaustion. I found that elapsed MA time did not significantly moderate the

relationship between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion among this

group of middle managers, $\beta = .006$, $p = .673$ (Table 19). Thus, I failed to reject the null

hypothesis (H_07), which states that the elapsed time of the merger announcement does not

significantly moderate the relationship between organizational adjustment and middle

manager emotional exhaustion. Subsequently, I rejected the alternate hypothesis (H_a7),

which states that elapsed MA time does significantly moderate the relationship between

organizational adjustment and middle manager emotional exhaustion.

Table 17

Regression Model Summary for Predictors of Emotional Exhaustion

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.341[a]	.116	.078	1.39777

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Mgmt_Tenure, Org Adjust-C,
Elapsed_MA_Time_C, OrgXElapsedMATime_C

Table 18

ANOVA Summary for Predictors of Emotional Exhaustion

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	35.372	6	5.895	3.017	.008[a]
1	Residual	269.618	138	1.954		
	Total	304.990	144			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Mgmt_Tenure, Org Adjust-C, Elapsed_MA_Time_C, OrgXElapsedMATime_C

Table 19

Standardized Regression Coefficients for Emotional Exhaustion

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	2.202	.446		4.934	.000
	Age	.017	.013	.123	1.293	.198
	Gender	-.529	.238	-.180	-2.221	.028
	Mgmt_Tenure	-.007	.030	.022	.227	.821
1	Org Adjust-C	-.319	.134	-.193	-2.382	.019
	Elapsed_MA_ Time_C	-.022	.013	-.140	-1.740	.084
	OrgXElapsed MATime_C	.006	.014	.035	.422	.673

I completed the next examination to determine whether elapsed MA time from the merger communication moderated the relationship between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios (RQ8). Once again, I began the examination by evaluating the predictive relationships between elapsed MA time and group adjustment related to emotional exhaustion. I analyzed the multiple regression model and found it was significant, F(5,

138) $= 11.155$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .29$. I also concluded that approximately 29% of the variation in emotional exhaustion was accounted for by the set of predictors in the model, including age, gender, management tenure, elapsed MA time, and group adjustment. Furthermore, I found that as elapsed MA time changes, emotional exhaustion decreases slightly, and this variable was a significant predictor of emotional exhaustion, $\beta = -.027$, $p = .017$. Moreover, I determined that group adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager emotional exhaustion, $\beta = -.391$, $p < .001$, meaning that as group adjustment changes, emotional exhaustion decreases among this group of middle managers.

Next, I evaluated the multiple regression results from the two procedures used to analyze the elapsed MA time interaction (Tables 20 through 22). As with the first examination, I found that both the regression model crafted in SPSS and the one developed using the Process Macro (Hayes, 2018) were significant, $F(6, 138) = 9.313$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .29$ (Tables 20 and 21). Moreover, I found that 29% of the variance in the emotional exhaustion scores was accounted for by the predictors in the model, including age, gender, management tenure, elapsed MA time, and group adjustment. Therefore, I further examined the regression model to determine the significance of the elapsed MA time variable moderating the relationship between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion. I determined that elapsed MA time did not significantly moderate the relationship between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion among this group of middle managers, $\beta = .004$, $p = .550$ (Table 22). Thus, I failed to reject the null hypothesis (H_08), which states that elapsed MA time of the merger announcement does

not significantly moderate the relationship between group adjustment and middle

manager emotional exhaustion. On the other hand, I rejected the alternate hypothesis

(H_a8), which states that elapsed MA time does significantly moderate the relationship

between group adjustment and middle manager emotional exhaustion.

Table 20

Regression Model Summary for Predictors of Emotional Exhaustion

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.537[a]	.288	.257	1.25423

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Mgmt_Tenure, Group Adjust-C, Elapsed_MA_Time_C, GroupXElapsedMATime_C

Table 21

ANOVA Summary for Predictors of Emotional Exhaustion

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	87.902	6	14.650	9.313	.000[a]
1	Residual	217.088	138	1.573		
	Total	304.990	144			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Mgmt_Tenure, Group Adjust-C, Elapsed_MA_Time_C, GroupXElapsedMATime_C

Table 22

Standardized Regression Coefficients for Emotional Exhaustion

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.702	.411		4.141	.000
	Age	.037	.012	.270	3.094	.002
	Gender	-.659	.215	-.224	-3.062	.003
	Mgmt_Tenure	-.015	.026	-.048	-.569	.570
	Group Adjust-C	-.393	.062	-.474	-6.366	.000
	Elapsed_MA_Time_C	-.027	.011	-.174	-2.409	.017
	GroupXElapsed MATime_C	.004	.007	.044	.600	.550

I concentrated the third examination on whether elapsed MA time from the merger communication moderated the relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios (RQ9). As was previously done, I began the examination by evaluating the predictive relationships between elapsed MA time and organizational adjustment related to cynicism. I found that the regression model was significant, $F(5, 139) = 3.373$, $p = .007$, $R^2 = .11$. Additionally, I concluded that approximately 11% of the variation in cynicism was accounted for by the set of predictors in the model, including age, gender, management tenure, elapsed MA time, and organizational adjustment. Furthermore, while I found that as elapsed MA time changes, cynicism decreases slightly, this variable was not a significant predictor of cynicism, $\beta = -.010$, $p = .411$. However, I discovered

that organizational adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism, β = -.277, p = .034, and as organizational adjustment changes, cynicism decreases among this group of middle managers.

Next, I evaluated the multiple regression results from the two procedures used to analyze the elapsed MA time interaction between organizational adjustment and cynicism (Tables 23 through 25). I examined both the multiple regression model crafted in SPSS and the one developed using the Process Macro (Hayes, 2018) and found the models were significant, $F(6, 138) = 3.324$, $p = .004$, $R^2 = .13$ (Tables 23 and 24). Moreover, I found that 13% of the variance in the cynicism scores was accounted for by the predictors in the model, including age, gender, management tenure, elapsed MA time, and organizational adjustment. Therefore, I further examined the regression model to determine the significance of the elapsed MA time variable moderating the relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism. I concluded that elapsed MA time did not significantly moderate the relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism among this group of middle managers, $\beta = .-011$, $p = .367$ (Table 25). Thus, I failed to reject the null hypothesis (H_09), which states that elapsed MA time does not significantly moderate the relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager cynicism. Conversely, I rejected the alternate hypothesis (H_a9), which states that elapsed MA time does significantly moderate the relationship between organizational adjustment and middle manager cynicism.

Table 23

Regression Model Summary for Predictors of Cynicism

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.355[a]	.126	.088	1.134133

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Mgmt_Tenure, Org Adjust-C, Elapsed_MA_Time_C, OrgXElapsedMATime_C

Table 24

ANOVA Summary for Predictors of Emotional Exhaustion

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	35.885	6	5.981	3.324	.004[a]
1	Residual	248.284	138	1.799		
	Total	284.169	144			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Mgmt_Tenure, Org Adjust-C, Elapsed_MA_Time_C, OrgXElapsedMATime_C

Table 25

Standardized Regression Coefficients for Cynicism

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	2.745	.428		5.778	.000
	Age	.004	.012	.032	.336	.737
	Gender	-.654	.228	-.231	-2.862	.005
	Mgmt_Tenure	.025	.028	.087	.897	.371
1	Org Adjust-C	-.270	.128	-.169	-2.101	.038
	Elapsed_MA_Time_C	-.011	.012	-.072	-.906	.367
	OrgXElapsedMATime_C	-.023	.013	-.140	-1.690	.093

During the final examination, I determined whether elapsed MA time from the merger communication moderated the relationship between group adjustment and cynicism in middle managers working in target organizations of M&A scenarios (RQ10). I began the examination by evaluating the predictive relationships between elapsed MA time and group adjustment related to cynicism. I found the regression model was significant, $F(5, 139) = 19.614$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .41$. Moreover, I concluded that approximately 41% of the variation in cynicism was accounted for by the set of predictors in the model, including age, gender, management tenure, elapsed MA time, and group adjustment. Furthermore, I determined that while as elapsed time changes, cynicism decreases slightly, this variable was not a significant predictor of cynicism, $\beta = -.016$, $p = .105$. However, I discovered that group adjustment was a significant predictor of middle manager cynicism, $\beta = -.480$, $p < .001$, and as group adjustment changes, cynicism decreases among this group of middle managers.

I examined the multiple regression results from the two procedures I used to evaluate the elapsed MA time interaction between group adjustment and cynicism (Tables 26 through 28). I discovered that both the regression model crafted in SPSS and the one developed using the Process Macro (Hayes, 2018) were significant, $F(6, 138) = 16.384$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .42$ (Tables 26 and 27). Moreover, I found that 42% of the variance in the cynicism scores was explained by the predictors in the model, including age, gender, management tenure, elapsed MA time, and group adjustment. Therefore, I examined the regression analysis outcome to determine the significance of the elapsed MA time variable moderating the relationship between group adjustment and cynicism. I

found that elapsed MA time did not significantly moderate the relationships between

group adjustment and cynicism among this group of middle managers, $\beta = .-004$, $p = .459$

(Table 28). Thus, I failed to reject the null hypothesis ($H_0 10$), which states that elapsed

MA time of the merger announcement does not significantly moderate the relationship

between group adjustment and middle manager cynicism. Conversely, I rejected the

alternate hypothesis ($H_a 10$), which states that elapsed MA time from the merger

announcement does significantly moderate the relationship between group adjustment

and middle manager cynicism.

Table 26

Regression Model Summary for Predictors of Cynicism

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.645[a]	.416	.391	1.09661

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Mgmt_Tenure, Group Adjust-C, Elapsed_MA_Time_C, GroupXElaspedMATime_C

Table 27

ANOVA Summary for Predictors of Cynicism

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	118.217	6	19.703	16.384	.000[a]
1	Residual	165.952	138	1.203		
	Total	284.169	144			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Age, Gender, Mgmt_Tenure, Group Adjust-C, Elapsed_MA_Time_C, GroupXElaspedMATime_C

Table 28

Standardized Regression Coefficients for Cynicism

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.768	.359		4.920	.000
	Age	.033	.010	.254	3.211	.002
	Gender	-.769	.188	-.271	-4.089	.000
	Mgmt_Tenure	-.019	.023	-.063	-.819	.414
	Group Adjust-C	-.478	.054	-.596	-8.840	.000
	Elapsed_MA_Time_C	-.016	.010	-.107	-1.639	.103
	GroupXElasped MATime_C	-.004	.006	-.050	-.742	.459

Summary

In chapter 4, I presented the detailed findings for each of the research questions I hypothesized for examining the relationships between newcomer adaptation factors and burnout dimensions, whether the adjustment factors could predict burnout dimensions, and whether a time variable moderated the relationships between adjustment factors and burnout dimensions. I found that while there was not a statistically significant relationship between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion, there was statistically significant relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism. Likewise, there were statistically significant relationships between group adjustment and both emotional exhaustion and cynicism, and they were negative. Moreover, I conducted an examination using multiple linear regression analysis and found that organizational

adjustment was not a significant predictor of either emotional exhaustion or cynicism. However, I discovered that group adjustment was a significant predictor of both emotional exhaustion and cynicism and that as this adjustment factor changes, emotional exhaustion and cynicism decreases. Finally, I found evidence that a factor of elapsed time, based on the timing of the merger communication and the date of the study, did not moderate the relationship between any of the independent and dependent variables. In Chapter 5, I will elaborate on these findings, discuss the social impacts of the results, outline the limitations of the study, present recommendations for future research, and discuss the implications of this research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

M&A transactions continue to be a common business strategy (IMAA, 2019), and thus, middle managers working in the M&A target organization are expected to adjust to the new organization and its workgroups (Sarala et al., 2019). Similarly, changes resulting from such adjustment requirements can lead to work-related stress (Kras et al., 2017), and if this stress becomes chronic over long periods of time, it can lead to burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Thus, while a body of research has focused on burnout in a variety of situational, contextual, and occupational settings, I identified a gap in the literature related to newcomer adaptation and burnout in middle managers working in the target organization of an M&A.

The purpose of this quantitative study was to evaluate whether newcomer adaptation, when experienced over time, is related to, or can predict job burnout in middle managers working in a target organization that has been part of an M&A scenario. The independent variables, conceptualized as organizational adjustment and group adjustment, tested various aspects of relationships associated with burnout, operationalized as emotional exhaustion, and cynicism as criterion variables. An intervening variable, conceptualized as the elapsed time from the merger announcement, was examined to determine if time moderated the relationship between the adjustment variables and burnout. Specifically, I examined the direction and strength of the relationships between the adjustment and burnout factors, evaluated the predictive relationships between these variables, and tested the effect of time on these relationships.

My examination revealed that while the relationship between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion was small and negative, it was not significant. On the other hand, I found that the relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism was also small and negative, but it was significant. I determined that the relationship between group adjustment was moderate and negative, as well as significant for both emotional exhaustion and cynicism. From a predictive perspective, my analysis determined the variables in the study, including the independent variable, only accounted for small to moderate variances in the burnout factors, implying that other factors were affecting the burnout scores among the population in this study. Likewise, I discovered that organizational adjustment was not a significant predictor of either emotional exhaustion or cynicism. However, group adjustment was found to be a significant predictor of both emotional exhaustion and cynicism, and as group adjustment changes, these burnout factors decrease, although only moderately. Finally, my examination of the effect of elapsed time from the merger announcement moderating the relationships between the organizational and group adjustment factors and emotional exhaustion and cynicism burnout dimensions found that time conceptualization did not significantly moderate any of these relationships.

In this chapter, I will explain the results of the findings from this research. I will discuss the limitations of the study and the recommendations for future research. Finally, I will document social change implications, and theoretical and practical implications arising from this study.

Interpretation of Findings

Organizational socialization theorists suggested that there are a variety of adaptation factors and approaches that organizations can deploy and that an individual can apply to help a newcomer adjust to a new organization or workgroup (Jones, 1986; van Maanen & Schein, 1979). These factors can be described as institutionalized or individualized approaches to adjustment (Jones, 1986) and are conceptualized as individual versus collective, formal versus informal, sequential versus random, fixed versus variable, serial versus disjunctive, and investiture versus divestiture (van Mannan & Schein, 1979). Thus, the various approaches to newcomer adjustment influences adaptation at both the organizational and workgroup level. These perspectives, along with other specific research related to these results, will be used to interpret the findings of this study.

Organizational Adjustment Factors and Burnout

I found that the correlational relationships between organizational adjustment and the burnout factors are negative. This inverse relationship could mean that as adjustment factors increase or improve, the burnout factors also improve; however, I can also conclude that the converse could also be true. Furthermore, while the hypothesis that stated that organizational adjustment was significantly related to emotional exhaustion was not supported, the hypothesis that stated there was a significant relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism was supported; however, this relationship is attenuated. Although the findings suggest that a significant moderate relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism exists, it is also negative.

My results suggest that while the predictive relationships between organizational adjustment and both emotional exhaustion and cynicism are negative, meaning that as this adjustment factor increases, these burnout dimensions decrease, organizational adjustment does not significantly predict either emotional cynicism. These findings imply that the individuals in this study did not perceive that organizational adjustment, or the adaptation to new organizational goals, expectations, and culture resulting from an M&A, caused them to be personally significantly emotionally exhausted, and only slightly improved their cynicism toward the new organization. Furthermore, in the context of organizational adjustment, my findings also suggest that either institutional or individualized tactics deployed during the adjustment period, as the managers from the target organization were adjusting to their new organization, may have been successful enough for these managers that burnout had not emerged for them. Although organizational socialization theorists argued that collective and formal institutional tactics provide consistency regarding organizational expectations (Jones, 1986), individualized and informal approaches promote innovation and creativity, which are outcomes that more closely align with employee engagement than burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2017). Likewise, socialization theorists also posited that when institutional tactics are serial and fixed, they provide stability by defining processes and organization to adjustment activities (Jones, 1986). Regarding organizational socialization theory, Jones (1986) stated that institutional investiture tactics provide internal resources that guide and mentor the newcomer through the adjustment period. Thus, these perspectives of approaches and tactics outlined by organizational socialization theorists and the

possibility that this population was successful with resources such as the type of information provided by the organization, how the organization delivered information, or the availability of insider resources during this phase of adaptation support the outcome of this study. Moreover, Ruppert et al. (2015) argued that personal or internal resources that help to balance incongruences between the organization and the individual are also useful in decreasing burnout. Thus, as individuals traverse the path from outsider to insider member through organizational adjustment, the identification and implementation of these personal resources, such as mindfulness or self-awareness (Ruppert et al., 2015), could also explain the findings from this study.

The findings from this study could be because of the length of time the participants have been involved in M&A activities. For example, Y. Tan and Shen (2016) found that adaptation processes begin early in a newcomer's experience and have the greatest effect within the first 4 months of the adjustment period. Moreover, Klein, Polin, and Sutton (2015) found that when different approaches to organizational onboarding were implemented early in the onboarding process, newcomers felt more socialized. Therefore, when considering that in this population, the average length of time the M&A had been in progress was nearly 21 months, early organizational adjustment strategies most likely had already been deployed and realized by these individuals, leading to the lack of an overall significant perceived linkage between this factor and burnout. In other words, too much time may have passed to connect any organizational adjustment outcomes to emotional exhaustion or cynicism. However, further research is needed to continue this investigation.

Group Adjustment Factors and Burnout

My findings from this research indicate that the relationships between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion and cynicism were negative and moderately significant, meaning that as group adjustment increases, these burnout factors decrease. Likewise, these findings could also mean that as burnout increases, group adjustment has been less successful. Moreover, group adjustment was also a significant negative predictor of both emotional exhaustion and cynicism, meaning that as group adjustment changes, these factors of burnout decrease. These findings indicate that this population of middle managers felt there was a link between group adaptation and emotional exhaustion and cynicism. However, the moderate negative relationship between these factors further suggests a positive perspective that as this adjustment factor improves, both emotional exhaustion and cynicism decrease, and thus, improves. But if group adjustment has been less successful, these burnout dimensions increase, which is a more negative outcome.

Organizational socialization theorists, in the context of newcomer adaptation, suggested that a key situational perspective of adjustment is domain-specific (Haueter et al., 2003), and argued that, in addition to understanding the organization, the newcomer must adjust to the new workgroup to be successful. Likewise, Yozgat and Güngörmez (2015) posited that one of the final stages of workgroup adjustment is the ability to resolve conflicts and handle the demands of the job. From both a positive and negative perspective, this outcome is congruent with other research studies relating to newcomer adaptation, and in particular, group adjustment. For instance, when newcomers are

successful with such adjustment, there is less interpersonal strain (Livi et al., 2018), less decline in job satisfaction (Boswell et al., 2005), and greater organizational commitment (Yozgat & Güngörmez, 2015). Likewise, Lapointe et al. (2014) contended that increased role clarity, which can lead to reduced burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2017), was linked to successful group adaptation. Moreover, van der Werff and Buckley (2017) argued that when group adjustment is successful early, trust relationships and dynamics among coworkers and supervisors develop effectively, which is also a key factor that can lead to reduced burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2017).

Conversely, Smith et al. (2017) suggested that when group adjustment is not successful, stressors and negative perspectives of the organization and workgroup can emerge. Furthermore, Nifadkar and Bauer (2016) contended that when conflicts arise between the newcomer and their coworkers, successful group adjustment is affected. Moreover, if group adjustment is not successful, newcomers can develop negative feelings about the organization as a whole, leading to withdrawal behaviors such as cynicism (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013).

Both of these perspectives are important outcomes since they can affect an individual's well-being in either a positive or negative way. Likewise, since middle managers perform pivotal roles in an M&A integration, often directing change initiatives (Pärl et al., 2016), successful workgroup adjustment is beneficial to the organization as well. Notwithstanding, future research to further examine these relationships is an important consideration.

Effect of Time on Burnout

A moderating variable, operationalized as the elapsed time of merger communication, was tested to determine if there was an interaction effect between the adjustment variables and burnout factors. The findings indicated that this time variable had no significant interaction between either organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion or cynicism, or group adjustment and the burnout factors. Although both organizational and group adjustment processes traverse through a time factor, successful adjustment outcomes occur within the first few weeks of a newcomer joining the organization or workgroup (van Veelen et al., 2016). Since I recruited middle managers, who were either currently involved in an M&A or those who had been involved in an M&A within the last 3 years, the average time span representing this factor in the study was nearly 2 years (21 months) and may have been too long. Likewise, while burnout is a response to long term exposure to stress (Maslach & Leiter, 2017), given the lack of significant relationships between the adjustment factors and burnout, testing the relationships only at the end of the time span may have contributed to these results. Finally, some study respondents were not able to recall the dates of the merger announcements or otherwise chose not to disclose them. This outcome lead to speculation that others who did provide dates may have only offered a best guess as to when the announcement was actually made within their organizations. This limitation may have also negatively affected the integrity of the data, and thus, the findings of this study. A longitudinal design, collecting data at the beginning of the study, and points through the

adjustment timeline could provide additional insights into how time affects newcomer adaptation and burnout factors.

Cultural Adaptation in an M&A Scenario

I focused this study on aspects of cultural adaptation in M&A scenarios, conceptualized as organizational and group adjustment, and understanding my findings in this broader context is important. Koi-Akrofi (2016) argued that cultural adaptation in an M&A scenario is often viewed as a key to the success of the M&A overall, or it has been targeted as a key to failure. Acculturation, which is adapting to a new culture, and deculturation, or adjusting from the old culture, must take place. These types of adjustments create a disequilibrium that can be stressful for individuals (Y. Kim, 2015). Individuals in target organizations compare and contrast a variety of organizational and workgroup dynamics of the acquiring organization, and when these evaluations uncover significant incongruences, such outcomes can create stress and anxiety during adjustment phases (see Buick et al., 2018; Hajro, 2015). Yet, Yildiz (2016) posited that when individuals in the target organization find congruence and similarities between themselves and groups in the new organization, the adjustment processes progress more smoothly and with less stress.

When considering middle manager organizational adjustment and group adjustment as forms of cultural adaptation in an M&A scenario and stressors, such as burnout, the results of this study provide additional insights. For example, because of the lack of statistically significant or strong correlational relationships between these adjustment factors and burnout, I inferred that the cultural adaptation factors defined in

this study might be either helping or hindering the cultural adaptation. However, I concluded that they are not promoting the risk of burnout. I determined that there was no significant relationship between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion, and the significant negative relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism was weak. On the other hand, I concluded that because of the significant negative predictive relationships in this population of middle managers, organizational adjustment and group adjustment could be considered successful in this context. In other words, these types of cultural adaptation factors, when executed properly, may reduce the risk or lessen the effects of burnout among middle managers in an M&A scenario. This could be an important finding since organizational socialization theorists, such as Chao et al. (1994), argued that organizational goals and values help a newcomer successfully align with the organization's mission. Moreover, Chao et al. contended that when newcomers are successful in organizational adaptation, this establishes a firm foundation for adjustment, allowing them to become effective members of the organization at large or within their specific workgroup.

Researchers have suggested that organizational change, stemming from M&A integration activities, can be threatening (Brueller et al., 2018; Wagner et al. 2014), overwhelming (Paustian-Underdahl et al., 2017), as well as stressful, especially when new workgroup relationships do not evolve successfully (Makri & Ntalianis, 2015). On the other hand, Rittschof and Fortunato (2016) contended that decreases in burnout were related to and could predict higher levels of affective and normative commitment, which is also a positive outcome. Thus, through successful workgroup adjustment, stressors

associated with M&A integration activities may be minimized and might also improve overall commitment among middle managers. Similarly, the outcome of this research may also provide valuable insights into middle manager success from an organizational perspective since developing successful workgroup relationships is critical for middle managers due to the pivotal role they play between executive leaders and lower-level associates (Pärl et al. 2016), especially when these managers are expected to implement top-down M&A related organizational changes (Sarala et al., 2019). Consequently, reducing stressors for middle managers is beneficial to the organization when change initiatives stem from M&A integration activities because these individuals can most likely be more productive and capable of implementing these types of organizational changes more effectively. Finally, time, as operationalized in this study, had no effect on the adaptation factors or stress. It is recommended that additional research or different research designs continue to examine these perspectives.

Limitations of the Study

I conducted this study using AMT as a recruiting strategy, which is considered a convenience sampling technique. Although a convenience sampling approach is useful in finding populations that are hard or expensive to locate (see Babbie, 2017), the facilitation of sampling through this procedure is a limitation of the study. Likewise, although I took special precautions to define specific participation requirements, it is unclear how individuals represented themselves as study participants. For example, I designed the study, including the recruiting invitation and the informed consent document, to specifically enroll middle managers, and I structured the AMT HIT so that

only managerial workers among the workforce were engaged through the AMT platform. However, it is not known how the AMT mechanisms or algorithms functioned to ensure the correct population was actually targeted. Thus, the study could have included individuals that were not actually middle managers or included middle managers that were not actually part of an M&A scenario.

The use of self-reporting is also a potential threat to validity, and this is a concern for this study. For example, several participants did not respond to the question asking for their length of tenure as a manager. Therefore, the study is not generalizable to all middle managers or all M&A scenarios. Likewise, several participants did not respond to the question asking for the date the merger was announced at their organization. This outcome might imply that respondents could not remember this date or simply chose not to provide it. Additionally, self-reporting responses to survey questions require that individuals answer honestly and accurately, and although this was stressed in the consent form, it is never a certainty that participants can or will respond accurately to past events (see Althubaiti, 2016). Thus, individuals may have either over – or underestimated their responses on the adjustment and burnout questionnaires based on how they felt at the time they took the survey.

Some of my design elements are also considered limitations in this study. The internal reliability of the organizational adjustment and group adjustment instruments is a challenging limitation for this study. Firstly, the subscale of the instrument I used to measure organizational adjustment did not meet internal reliability thresholds, and I could not adequately remedy this matter. Likewise, the subscale of the instrument I used to

measure workplace belongingness, conceptualized as group adjustment, only consisted of three items. Once I conducted the reliability analysis, I found that one of the items had to be removed to improve the strength of the internal reliability of the instrument. This adjustment left only two items in the subscale for analysis, and thus, this may have weakened the group adjustment analysis. Because of that weakness, those results may not be generalizable.

Some of the statistical assumptions required to accurately examine the data using linear regression methods were questioned as being in violation of one or more of these assumptions. For instance, I completed the normality analysis through evaluating Q-Q plots and found that age, and management tenure, used as control variables, and to some extent, organizational adjustment, conceptualized as one of the independent variables, showed questionable linear relationships. Additionally, I conducted the homoscedasticity analysis through the use of standardized residual plots. My analysis indicated that two of the control variables, age and management tenure, when compared with both dependent variables, emotional exhaustion and cynicism, showed the possible violation of this assumption. The same observation was made regarding the homoscedasticity of the organizational adjustment variable and emotional exhaustion and cynicism. These observations weaken the conclusions resulting from the findings in the study.

Finally, the definition of the moderating variable, conceptualized as the elapsed time from the announcement of the merger, may have weakened the examination of that variable. It is known that burnout manifests over time (Maslach & Leiter, 2017); however, critical adjustment factors, when successful, emerge early in the adaptation

process (Klein et al., 2015; Y. Tan & Shen, 2016). Thus, a 3 year time period may have been too long to develop a meaningful relationship between the adjustment variables and the burnout factors in the study. Thus, this could be considered a weakness in the design of this study.

Recommendations

There are several recommendations for future research. I did not confirm a predictive relationship between organizational adjustment and either of the two burnout factors, nor did the findings confirm a correlational relationship between organizational adjustment and cynicism. Therefore, additional research into these relationships is recommended. To further examine the relationships presented in this study, a qualitative study design to explore lived experiences of those middle managers working in target organizations of an M&A could provide richer information into the types of stressors those individual experience during the adjustment from the target organization and workgroup to the new or merged organization. A longitudinal research design is recommended o further examine the effects of time on adjustment and burnout relationships. This type of design, measuring adjustment and burnout factors early after the merger announcement, then at periods 3, 6, 12, or 18 months along the trajectory of adaptation, may provide greater or more significant insights into how time affects these relationships. Since I did not include the third factor in the burnout construct in this study, known as reduced personal accomplishment, studies including this dimension of burnout are recommended. Since I confirmed relationships between group adjustment and emotional exhaustion and cynicism, research to study employee engagement factors,

the antithesis of burnout (Maslach & Leiter, 2017), may also provide insights into how adjustment factors affect middle managers working in target organizations in an M&A. Finally, I am advocating that this research study or any of the recommended research opportunities could also be extended to other populations of workers in M&A target companies.

Implications

I designed this study to investigate what was not known about M&A cultural adaptation factors and burnout. I limited the scope of the study to a population of middle managers working in target organizations of M&A actions within the last 3 years. I could not confirm a significant relationship between organizational adjustment and emotional exhaustion, and only a minor significant relationship to cynicism. However, I found that there were significant negative relationships between group adjustment and both burnout variables. Additionally, I did not identify a significant moderating relationship, based on the elapsed time of the merger announcement, between any of the independent or dependent variables.

Social Change Implications

I discovered significant predictive relationships between group adjustment and both emotional exhaustion and cynicism, indicating that as group adjustment improves, these burnout factors also improve. This outcome adds to what is currently known about workgroup adjustment, that successful adjustment outcomes can reduce stress for employees transitioning from a known workgroup into a new one (see Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Livi et al., 2018). Thus, my social change message for organizations

involved in or contemplating M&A activities is to ensure that approaches to onboarding middle managers from the target organization into workgroups in the new organization are considered thoughtfully. Pärl et al. (2016) identified middle managers as vital resources during M&A integration activities, therefore, I recommend that reducing burnout in this population through successful group adjustment processes not only assists the organization in a successful outcome of the M&A, but also protects the well-being of the individual and their ability to continue to contribute positively within the organization and in society overall.

Theoretical Implications

Organizational socialization theorists have argued that understanding an individual's needs factors is a key in successful newcomer adaptation, and that adjustment is required whenever an individual changes their current working scenario (see van Maanen & Schein, 1979), whereby they must transition from an outsider to an insider member (see Livi et al., 2018; Madlock & Chory, 2014; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016). Furthermore, scholars contend that when adjustment processes are less than successful, adverse outcomes emerge (Ganster & Rosen, 2013). In an M&A situation, this study shows that although, to some extent, successful middle manager organizational adjustment can reduce cynicism, successful group adjustment can reduce both emotional exhaustion and cynicism.

There is an abundance of research supporting burnout theory. However, there has been little research conducted on the situational context of M&As. Likewise, little research is available that discusses relationships between burnout and newcomer

adaptation factors. Thus, the results confirming relationships between organizational adjustment and cynicism, and group adjustment and emotional exhaustion and cynicism add to this large body of existing knowledge. Furthermore, this study shows linkages between successful adjustment factors and how they might reduce burnout during a stressful event such as an M&A.

Implications for Practice

The results of this research can inform human resource managers involved in M&A activities at either the target or acquiring organization and provide them with insights on the importance of determining adequate onboarding and socialization processes as part of M&A integration planning. In particular, based on my findings, group socialization and adjustment processes are of greater significance than organizational adjustment. Furthermore, the conclusions suggest that as group adjustment improves, burnout factors also improve. Thus, more attention to middle managers who are expected to transition from their current workgroup to a new structure is recommended.

Since middle managers are believed to be critical contributors during M&A integration activities and subsequent change initiatives arising from these actions, reducing stressors affecting these types of leaders is an important consideration. Therefore, I recommend that organizations help middle managers adjust to their workgroups during the early stages of merger integration activities. This positions these individuals to be successful in implementing the change initiatives, which, in turn, could produce successful overall M&A integration outcomes. Middle managers run the risk of

burnout due to the nature of their role between upper management and the individual

contributors (Phillips-Hall & Galbraith, 2019), and the demands and pace of the job

(Moczydlowska, 2016). Therefore, since the fundamental role of a middle manager is

considered to be sufficiently stressful, providing support for workgroup transitions as part

of an overall M&A integration plan seems paramount. Additionally, although time was

not found to be a significant factor in this study, other researchers have found that early

success in adjustment processes generates positive outcomes (Livi et al., 2018).

Therefore, to assist with adjustment processes early, having a plan developed and ready

to execute before the M&A commences is recommended.

Conclusion

I contend that this study advances the understanding of cultural adaptation factors

affecting middle managers working in target organizations of M&As. Specifically, my

focus was to examine newcomer adaptation factors, conceptualized as organizational and

group adjustment, and determine if there were correlational or predictive relationships to

emotional exhaustion and cynicism and evaluate the effect of time on those relationships.

My study provides new insights into those relationships. While I could not confirm other

perspectives associated with adjustment and burnout relationships, I provided new

insights into negative relationships between organizational adjustment and cynicism, and

group adjustment and both burnout variables. The value of this outcome is knowing that

as the predictive adjustment factors increase, burnout decreases, and thus, improves. With

this understanding, human resource departments in organizations that are currently

involved in or contemplating M&A transactions can take action to add elements to their

integration planning processes and approaches that allow them to achieve similar outcomes for their middle managers and organizations. Positive adjustment outcomes that reduce stress are important to the success of the M&A at the organizational level and for the ongoing well-being and productivity of its middle managers. Moreover, I laid the groundwork for additional research into M&A adjustment factors and burnout.

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Appendix A: Organizational Assimilation Index- Extended Version

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Source

Gailliard, B. M., Myers, K. K., & Seibold, D. R. (2010). Organizational assimilation: A multidimensional reconceptualization and measure. *Management Communication Quarterly, 24*(4), 552-578. doi:10.1077/0893318910374933, © 2010 by SAGE Publications, Reproduced by Permission of SAGE publications.

PsycTESTS Citation

Gailliard, B. M., Myers, K. K., & Seibold, D. R. (2010b). *Organizational assimilation Index-extended version* [Database record]. Retrieved from PsycTESTS. doi:10.1037/t34907-000

Acculturation Subscale Items

- I understand the standards of the organization
- I think I have a good idea about how this organization operates
- I know the values of my organization
- I do not mind being asked to perform work according to my organization's standards

Appendix B: Belongingness at Work Scale

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Source

Den Hartog, D. N., De Hoogh, A. H. B., & Keegan, A. E. (2007). The interaction effects of belongingness and charisma on helping and compliance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 92*(4), 1131-1139. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.924.1131

PsycTESTS Citation

Den Hartog, D. N., De Hoogh, A. H. B., & Keegan, A. E. (2007). *Belongingness at Work Scale* [Database record]. Retrieved from PsycTESTS. doi:10.1037/t08890-000.

Belongingness Subscale Items

- When at work, I really feel like I belong
- I feel quite isolated from others at work (reverse coded)
- I don't seem to "connect" with others in the work group (reverse coded)

Appendix C: Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey

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To Whom It May Concern,

The above-named person has made a license purchase from Mind Garden, Inc. and has permission to administer the following copyrighted instrument up to that quantity purchased: Maslach Burnout Inventory forms: General Survey.

The three sample items only from this instrument as specified below may be included in your thesis or dissertation. Any other use must receive prior written permission from Mind Garden. The entire instrument form may not be included or reproduced at any time in any other published material. Please understand that disclosing more than we have authorized will compromise the integrity and value of the test.

Citation of the instrument must include the applicable copyright statement listed below.

Sample Items:

MBI - General Survey - MBI-GS:

- I feel emotionally drained from my work.
- In my opinion, I am good at my job.
- I doubt the significance of my work.

Sincerely,

Robert Most

Mind Garden, Inc.

www.mindgarden.com