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Job Burnout and Turnover Intentions Among Telecommuting Call Center Agents

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Walden University
2021

Abstract

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by

Gigianna Griffin

MS, Walden University, 2015

BS, Saint Leo University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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Abstract

Telecommuters have been shown to have higher job satisfaction and job performance and lower turnover intentions and job-related stress than office-based workers. The association between telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intentions of call center agents has not been fully investigated. The purpose of this study was to determine if telecommuting is associated with job burnout, and turnover intentions among call center agents. Maslach and Jackson's burnout theory was used as the theoretical framework. Data were obtained from a convenience sample of 89 nontelecommuter and 63 telecommuter call center agents in the United States via an online survey. This nonexperimental correlational study used a one-way multivariate analysis of variance to determine if telecommuting was associated with job burnout and turnover intentions among call center agents. The findings showed that there was a statistically significant difference in exhaustion and cynicism, with nontelecommuters reporting significantly higher levels of exhaustion and cynicism compared to telecommuters. There was no significant difference in professional efficacy or turnover intentions between telecommuting and nontelecommuting call center agents. The findings of this study extend knowledge on previous research on telecommuting, job burnout (cynicism, exhaustion, professional efficacy), and turnover intentions by evaluating the relationship between the variables among call center agents. The results may contribute to organizational policies to increase in telecommuting opportunities among call center agents and contribute to positive social change by organizations using telecommuting as one of the ways to reduce exhaustion and cynicism among nontelecommuters.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The focus of this study was to determine the extent of the relationship between telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intention. In this study, I determined the relationship between telecommuting and the three dimensions of job burnout (cynicism, exhaustion, and professional efficacy) and turnover intentFFions in call center agents, using Maslach and Jackson's (1981) burnout theory as the theoretical framework. Call center agents have been shown to experience high levels of burnout and turnover intentions (D'Alleo & Santangelo, 2011; Hechanova, 2013). Research has shown that telecommuters experience lower turnover intentions than nontelecommuters (Golden, 2006; Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999). Prior research in these areas has not examined the relationship between telecommuting, all three dimensions of job burnout, and turnover intentions among call center agents.

The cost of high turnover in call centers is an increase in hiring and training costs, understaffed phones, higher customer wait times, and an increase in the amount of calls answered and stress of call center agents (de Ruyter et al, 2001; Tuten & Neidermeyer, 2004). Telecommuting helps organizations minimize expenses by being able to maintain enough employees without the need for additional office space (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). The benefits of telecommuting may also include lower turnover (Bloom et al., 2014). Research has shown that there is a positive relationship between telecommuting and job satisfaction (DuBRIN, 1991). Telecommuting can be a benefit to those with physical limitations and transportation related issues. Determining the relationship between telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intentions may have social change

implications that may lead to organizational policy changes that result in less job burnout and turnover among call center agents.

In Chapter 1, I review the background of the study, explain the problem statement, and purpose of the study. The research questions and hypotheses are listed, along with the theoretical framework and nature of the study, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3. This chapter also includes a discussion of the operational definitions, assumptions, and scope and delimitations. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations and significance of the study.

Background

Researchers have shown that call center agents experience high job burnout (cynicism, exhaustion, professional efficacy) and turnover intentions (D'Alleo & Santangelo, 2011; Hechanova, 2013). D'Alleo and Santangelo (2011) found that there was a strong relationship between the organizational climate of call centers and job burnout. Call center agents perceived autonomy as low, and perceived a significant amount of work pressure and stress. The study also found that there was a close relationship between the representatives' emotional exhaustion and high job strain, and that the representatives experienced a high level of job burnout. Research has shown there is a stronger negative relationship between cynicism and professional efficacy for inbound representatives compared to outbound representatives (Rod & Ashill, 2013). Choi et al. (2012) found that depersonalization (cynicism), emotional exhaustion (exhaustion), and reduced personal accomplishment (professional efficacy) accounted for 35% of call center agents' turnover intentions. The researchers also found that there was

a weak relationship between reduced personal accomplishment (professional efficacy) and turnover intentions.

The exhaustion component of job burnout among call center agents has been found to be associated with several other work-related variables. High workload, negative customer interactions, longer job tenure, and work tasks that lacked variety negatively affected exhaustion levels in call center agents (Deery et al., 2010). Exhaustion has also been shown to be associated with higher absenteeism rates of call center agents (Deery et al., 2010). Poddar and Madupalli (2012) found that customers' unreasonable demands and abuse led to emotional exhaustion (exhaustion), which in turn leads to less job satisfaction. The researchers also found that when job dissatisfaction is the result of customer abuse, call centers agents show a stronger desire to leave the occupation rather than only the organization.

Researchers have also investigated role stress among call center agents. De Ruyter et al. (2001) conducted a study on the effect of role stress on employee performance and job satisfaction in call centers. The researchers found that autonomy had a positive impact on role stress, job satisfaction had a positive impact on job performance, and that job satisfaction indirectly and directly had a positive influence on turnover intentions through organizational commitment. Add summary and synthesis to fully develop and then conclude the paragraph.

Research has addressed the positive effects of telecommuting. The more an employee telecommutes the more committed they are to the organization, and they also have fewer turnover intentions (Golden, 2006). Igbaria and Guimaraes (1999) found that

telecommuters had significantly lower role conflict and role ambiguity. The researchers also found that telecommuters were more satisfied with supervision, their work, had higher job satisfaction, and lower turnover intentions than nontelecommuters. Caillier (2011) did not find a significant difference between the turnover intentions of telecommuters and nontelecommuters among federal government employees. However, he did find that nontelecommuting employees who were denied the opportunity to telecommute reported higher turnover intentions than frequent and infrequent telecommuters. The results of this study imply that nontelecommuting employees who have been denied the opportunity to telecommute may report higher turnover intentions than telecommuters. Gajendran and Harrison (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of consequences of telecommuting and found that telecommuting was associated with several positive outcomes. However, they also reported that high-intensity telecommuting had a negative relationship with coworker relationship quality. For their meta-analysis, coworker relationship quality included coworker satisfaction, support, trust, degree of communication and interaction, perceived work group cohesiveness, and commitment to or identification with their team or work unit. The nature of call center agent work generally does not allow time for significant coworker interaction during working hours and break times often varies among workers day-by-day based on expected call volume (Batt & Moynihan, 2002; Paul & Huws, 2002). Thus, while high-intensity telecommuting may have a negative relationship with coworker relationship quality, there may not be a significant difference in coworker relationship quality among telecommuting and non-telecommuting call center agents.

It has been suggested that there is a need for further research on how scheduling and staffing practices affect turnover (Aksin et al., 2007). Research has also identified different moderators of the relationship of job burnout and turnover intentions of call center agents, but research has not addressed the relationship between telecommuting and turnover intentions of call center agents (Choi et al., 2012). This study filled the gap in the literature by examining the relationship between telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intentions among call center agents.

Problem Statement

The problem of high turnover rates continues to negatively impact call centers (Hillmer et al., 2004; Tuten & Neidermeyer, 2004). Call center agent positions are often considered high stress jobs faced with goals that sometimes conflict, such as achieving customer resolution while the customer is on the phone, while adhering to average call handling time guidelines (de Ruyter et al., 2001). Call center turnover rates average 30%, which carries an approximate cost of $10,000 per worker (Tuten & Neidermeyer, 2004). A variety of organizations have been known to offer the opportunity to telecommute as an incentive to reduce absenteeism and turnover, and to increase organizational commitment (Overbey, 2013).

Telecommuters have reported that their ability to work remotely lessens the likelihood of leaving their organization (Golden et al., 2008; Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999). Igbaria and Guimaraes (1999) found that among salespeople, telecommuters had lower turnover intentions than nontelecommuters. Golden (2006) studied professionals of an internet solutions company and found that the more time an employee spent

telecommuting the lesser their turnover intentions. The study also found that work exhaustion mediated the relationship between telecommuting and turnover intentions. Gajendran and Harrison (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of 46 studies and found that telecommuting was associated with lower turnover intentions. In a study of telecommuting and nontelecommuting U.S. federal workers, Caillier (2011) found that there was not a significant difference in turnover intentions between telecommuters and nontelecommuters. Add summary to fully conclude the paragraphy.

Call centers continue to be one of the main communication channels organizations use to resolve customer issues (Schalk & Van Rijckevorsel, 2007). They also continue to suffer from high levels of turnover (Das et al., 2013; Khan & Du, 2014). Healy and Bramble (2003) compared the burnout results of the call center agents in their study to other researchers' prior studies on burnout and they found that only lawyers and childcare workers had higher levels of emotional exhaustion (exhaustion) and depersonalization (cynicism). Another study identified work-life balance as one of the factors that negatively affects the turnover intentions of call center agents in South Africa (Dhanpat et al., 2018). Another recent study found that commuting stress contributed to higher turnover intentions among Turkish employees that mostly worked in the low-tech manufacturing sector, but participants also included workers in the service and trade industries (Demiral, 2018). However, there is a lack of research examining the relationship between telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intentions among call center agents. For example, Bloom et al. (2014) conducted an experiment with call center agents in China, which showed telecommuters had lower actual turnover compared to in-

house workers. The study did not investigate the relationship between telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intentions among these workers. Aksin et al. (2007) reviewed literature and determined that there was a need to understand how staffing and scheduling impact turnover among call center agents. Therefore, I sought to fill this gap in the literature by addressing the research problem of whether there is a relationship between telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intentions among call center agents. Understanding the relationship between telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intentions of call center agents helps organizations determine the usefulness of implementing a telecommuting program.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if telecommuting is associated with job burnout and turnover intentions among call center agents. To address this gap, I conducted a quantitative study to survey telecommuting and non-telecommuting call center agents to assess job burnout (cynicism, exhaustion, professional efficacy) and turnover intentions. The independent variable was telecommuting (telecommuting agents, nontelecommuting agents). The dependent variables included job burnout (cynicism, exhaustion, professional efficacy) and turnover intentions.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

RQ1: To what extent is telecommuting associated with the exhaustion component of job burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey exhaustion subscale, among call center agents?

$H_0$1: There is no significant difference in the level of exhaustion between

nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

$H_1$1: There is a significant difference in the level of exhaustion between

nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

RQ2: To what extent is telecommuting associated with the cynicism component

of job burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey

cynicism subscale, among call center agents?

$H_0$2: There is no significant difference in the level of cynicism between

nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

$H_1$2: There is a significant difference in the level of cynicism between non-

telecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

RQ3: To what extent is telecommuting associated with the professional efficacy

component of job burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General

Survey professional efficacy subscale, among call center agents?

$H_0$3: There is no significant difference in the level of professional efficacy

between nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

$H_1$3: There is a significant difference in the level of professional efficacy between

nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

RQ4: To what extent is telecommuting associated with turnover intentions, as

measured by the turnover intention subscale from the Michigan Organizational

Assessment Questionnaire, among call center agents?

$H_0$4: There is no significant difference in the level of turnover intentions between nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

$H_1$4: There is a significant difference in the level of turnover intentions between nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

Theoretical Framework

Maslach and Jackson's (1981) burnout theory was used for this study. I chose it because there is a relationship between job burnout and turnover intentions. Call center agents have been shown to experience high levels of burnout and turnover intentions (Choi et al., 2012). Maslach and Jackson's burnout theory was used to better understand the burnout call center agents experience and how it impacts turnover intentions. Maslach and Jackson's asserted that continual job stress results in workers experiencing cynicism, exhaustion, and professional efficacy, which are the three components of the theory (Maslach et al., 2001). The theorists posited that the demanding nature of service can lead to emotional exhaustion (exhaustion) as a response to experiencing job overload. Depersonalization (cynicism) happens when a worker emotionally distances their self from clients in response to the emotional stress associated with their job. Reduced personal accomplishment (professional efficacy) happens when overwhelming job demands erode at a worker's sense of being effective (Maslach et al., 2001). The theoretical framework will be explained in more detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a nonexperimental quantitative design using survey methodology. The independent variable was telecommuting. The dependent variables

were turnover intentions and the three components of job burnout (exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy). A comparative survey design was used to examine possible differences in job burnout and turnover intentions between telecommuting and nontelecommuting call center agents. A comparative survey design allows for inferences and comparisons based on the quantitative data collected from the sample of telecommuting and non-telecommuting call center agents (Creswell, 2014). A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was used to analyze the data using the SPSS 25.0 software package.

Definitions

Call center: Call centers are environments in which workers make and receive phone calls to answer questions and resolve customer issues. Call centers are sometimes integrated into customer contact centers that involves workers interacting with customers via a variety of communication channels, including online chat and email (Berkbigler & Dickson, 2014; Fartash & Gharechedaghi, 2012).

Call center agents: Call center agents work at call centers handling outbound and/or inbound phone calls to resolve customer issues and answer questions (Aksin et al., 2007).

Cynicism: Cynicism is a component of job burnout that involves avoiding psychological strain by psychologically disconnecting from the workplace, which is sometimes referred to as depersonalization (Lee & Ashforth, 1990).

Exhaustion: Exhaustion is a component of job burnout that involves a worker feeling psychologically and physically drained, which is sometimes referred to as emotional exhaustion (Lee & Ashforth, 1990).

Job burnout: Job burnout is the depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and reduce personal accomplishment that are a result of continual job stress (Choi et al., 2012; Maslach et al., 1996).

Professional Efficacy: Professional efficacy is a component of job burnout that involves the worker perceiving that they are less effective at their job and the resulting poor job performance, which is sometimes referred to as reduced personal accomplishment (Lee & Ashforth, 1990).

Telecommuting: Telecommuting, also known as telework, is a work arrangement that involves working outside the organization's physical office. It often involves communicating and submitting completed work via the telephone and Internet (Golden et al., 2008).

Turnover intention: Turnover intention is an employee's intent to voluntarily leave their job (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999).

Assumptions

This study was based on several assumptions. First, I assumed that the participants completing the survey answered honestly. A statement reminding the participants about the importance of this survey and scientific integrity is assumed to have a positive effect on the honesty of the participants. Second, I assumed that the participants completing the survey carefully read and understood the items as they are

written and that their answers reflected what the item intends to measure. Thirdly, I assumed that participants' possible concerns regarding their organization reducing telecommuting opportunities did not bias their responses. Fourth, I assumed that the participants have worked for their current organization for at least 6 months and in that time they have encountered aspects of the job that may be stressful and lead to specific aspects of burnout and/or intentions to leave. Bria et al. (2014) conducted a similar study and confirmed the dimensionality of the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey among healthcare professionals in Romania using participants with a minimum of 6 months experience in their position. Fifth, I assumed that the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey and the Turnover Intention subscale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire measure what they purport to measure. All reliability and validity information will be presented in Chapter 3.

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study is on the relationship between telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intentions of call center agents, using the job burnout theory. I chose to focus on only call center agents that telecommute or work in-house since research shows that call center agents experience high levels of job burnout and turnover, and that their job can be done entirely remotely or in-house (Bloom et al., 2014; Hechanova, 2013; Rod & Ashill, 2013).

The delimitations in this study stemmed from the selection of participants of telecommuting and nontelecommuting call center agents residing in the United States. To participate in this study, participants need to work for their current organization for at

least 6 months since it is reasonable amount of time for a worker to become acclimated to their current position and work environment. There were no other criteria for inclusion. While it was not possible for the participants to be randomly chosen, being that all participants worked at the same organization, I hoped the study will be generalizable toother call center agents in the United States.

Limitations

One of the most important threats to validity to consider was the sampling of participants. Since a convenience sample was used, participants were not random. Random samples have higher validity than nonrandom samples (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). To aid in generalizability, which helps with external validity, I tried to include a diverse sample of participants (see Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). In addition, this research used a nonexperimental correlational design. Using a nonexperimental design limited the ability to determine cause and effect as there was not any manipulation of the independent variable, and participants was not randomly chosen. This research only determined whether there is a relationship among the variables.

There are also threats to internal validity. One threat to internal validity was the difference in the way the survey is displayed on different devices. Surveys being displayed differently on each participants' screen can affect how the questions are interpreted (Wiersma, 2013). Participants completed the survey at a variety of locations. A second threat to internal validity is that there are several factors that could impact job burnout and turnover intentions that was not being assessed in this study. For example, Li

and Zhou (2013) found that customer verbal aggression led to higher turnover intentions among call center agents. Add summary to fully conclude the paragraph.

One threat to external validity was the selection of participants. This study used a convenience sample instead of a random sampling. Convenience sampling has lower external validity because characteristics of the participants may not be equally distributed and representative of the entire population (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). To minimize this threat, I attempted to collect data from a diverse sample of call center agents so that my data is generalizable. Another threat to external validity was a low response. Survey invitations ending up in recipients' SPAM folder is an issue for survey invites sent via email (Wiersma, 2013). This threat was eliminated by posting survey invitations to the Facebook groups every week for almost 3 months.

Another threat to internal validity is the difference in the way the survey is displayed on different devices. Display effects is equated to interviewer effects (Wiersma, 2013). The differences in how the survey is displayed on the screen may affect how the questions are interpreted like how differences in an interviewer may affect a participant's response. Another threat to internal validity is that participants' job burnout may be caused from other aspects of their job that is unrelated to telecommuting. For example, perceptions of role stress have been shown to have a significant positive relationship with burnout and turnover intentions (Jung et al., 2012).

Significance

This research contributes to the scholarly literature on telecommuting and call center agents and filled a gap in the literature by determining if telecommuting is

associated with job burnout and turnover intentions among call center agents. This research is also important for those that make decisions about call center operation policies. A policy change that increases the opportunity to telecommute for call center agents can have a positive financial impact for organizations through the reduction of the costs associated with high turnover. Call center organization increasing telecommuting opportunities can also benefit workers with transportation issues and physical limitations. This study has positive social change implications as the results may be used by organizations to implement a telecommuting policy. More specifically, organizations that employ call center agents may modify existing policies to provide telecommuting opportunities.

Summary

Chapter 1 began with an introduction to this study. This chapter also included the background of the study, the problem statement, research questions and hypotheses, and definitions of key terms used in this study. This study added to the existing literature of scholarly studies by addressing a gap in the literature regarding the importance of determining the relationship between telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intentions of call center agents. Chapter 2 will include a thorough review of the current literature pertaining to telecommuting, job burnout and turnover intention. Chapter 2 will also include a more detailed discussion of the theoretical framework.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The problem was studied is burnout rates and turnover among call center agents. The purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a relationship between telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intentions among telecommuting call center agents. There appears to be an agreement in the literature that burnout and turnover is a serious issue in call centers (see Choi et al., 2012; de Ruyter et al., 2001; Khan & Du, 2014; Poddar & Madupalli, 2012; Wallace et al., 2000). A review of the literature shows that the majority of call center research focuses on burnout and turnover, and their antecedents and consequences in non-U.S. based call centers (see Deery et al., 2002; de Ruyter et al., 2001; Poddar & Madupalli, 2012; Rod & Ashill, 2013; Wallace et al., 2000). Research has shown that there are organizations that accept burnout and turnover as a facet of the call center position and as a result focus on replacing burned out workers with a more motivated staff rather than trying to minimize the occurrence of burnout and the resulting turnover (see Wallace et al., 2000). Further research is needed examining job burnout and turnover in different call center settings (Khan & Du, 2014; Schalk & Van Rijckevorsel 2007).

Chapter 2 will cover the literature search strategy and a review of the literature related to telecommuting, call center agents, job burnout, and turnover intentions. This chapter will begin with a review of Maslach and Jackson's (1981) burnout theory followed by the role of call center agents. The advantages and disadvantages of

telecommuting will then be reviewed. The review will conclude with research related to job burnout and turnover intentions.

Literature Search Strategy

Google Scholar was used to locate relevant literature. Walden Library was used to access PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO and Business Source Complete databases to locate peer-reviewed articles. The timeframe of 1974 to present was used for the search. The search terms used were *moderating job burnout and turnover intentions*, *moderating job burnout*, *telecommuting and job burnout and turnover*, *telecommuting and job burnout*, *telecommuting and turnover*, *call center and turnover*, *call center and job burnout*, *call center and job burnout and turnover*, *remote work and job burnout and turnover*, *job burnout and turnover intentions*, and *telecommuting advantages or telecommuting disadvantages*.

Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical framework for this study was the Maslach and Jackson's (1981) burnout theory. Freudenberger (1974) first published an article discussing a feeling he and his colleagues had while working at free clinic that they referred to as "burn-out". Freudenberger asserted that burn-out typically occurred within the first year of employment and included behavioral symptoms like paranoia. While the term burnout was coined in the mid-1970s, previous studies with similar symptoms were published with terms such as "exhaustion reaction" (Schaufeli et al., 1993).

According to Maslach and Jackson (1981), job burnout theory is comprised of three dimensions. Emotional exhaustion (exhaustion) is the core dimension of burnout. In

the workplace, exhaustion can result from continual stress and the demands of the job.

When many people state they feel burned out, they are actually referring to exhaustion

(Maslach et al., 2001). Depersonalization (cynicism) involves developing a cynical

attitude towards people and things in the workplace. Reduced personal accomplishment

(inefficacy) can be a result of exhaustion and/or depersonalization (Maslach et al., 2001).

Exhaustion and cynicism can result in a feeling of ineffectiveness and inhibit actually

being effective.

Previous research has shown that there is a relationship between burnout and

turnover intentions. Burnout has been found to predict turnover intentions (Du Plooy &

Roodt, 2010). Role stress leads to increased burnout, which in turn increases turnover

intentions (Kim & Stoner, 2008). Role stress is composed of three role stressors: role

ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload. Exhaustion, which is the core component of

burnout has been found to directly predict turnover (Zhang & Feng, 2011). For example,

Oyeleye et al. (2013) conducted an exploratory study and found that higher levels of

burnout was significantly related to higher turnover intentions among nurses. The study

also found that high levels of burnout and stress lead to workplace incivility.

Research has shown that burnout and the individual components of burnout are

prevalent issues in call centers (Castanheira & Chambel, 2010; Rod & Ashill, 2013).

Castanheira and Chambel (2010) found that human resources (HR) involvement systems,

which include performance related pay, ongoing training to improve skills and

knowledge, and worker participation in decision making, reduced job burnout in call

centers. Rod and Ashill (2013) found that while emotional exhaustion (exhaustion) had a

significant impact on depersonalization (cynicism) for both outbound and inbound call center agents, the impact was significantly stronger for outbound agents than inbound agents. Add summary and synthesis throughout the paragraph. Develop a strong conclusion for the paragraph.

Turnover has also been identified as prevalent issue in call centers (Schalk & Van Rijckevorsel, 2007; Wallace et al., 2000). Schalk and Van Rijckevorsel (2007) found that work-related attitudes (well-being and organizational commitment) had a direct relationship with absenteeism levels and turnover intentions. Wallace et al. (2000) conducted a case analysis involving four call centers in Australia that accepted high turnover and emotional burnout as a part of the business rather than trying to improve the morale of their workers. The call centers were found to have high levels of turnover, stress, and emotional burnout (Wallace et al., 2000). Research has indicated that the more time workers spend telecommuting the lower their turnover intentions due to the emotional drain associated with constant contact with the characteristics of a traditional office and the time saved by not commuting that can be used for other things, such as family and recreation (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden, 2006). Burnout has been shown to be a precursor to turnover intentions. Burnout and turnover intentions are serious issues among call center workers (Choi et al., 2012). One of the positive consequences of telecommuting has been shown to be a reduced likelihood of turnover intentions (Greer & Payne, 2014). The burnout theory developed by Maslach and Jackson (1981) provided a basis for understanding burnout in call centers and the resulting

turnover intent. Add summary and synthesis throughout the paragraph to balance out the use of information from the literature with your own analysis.

Call Center Agents

Call center agents handle inbound and/or outbound calls that may encompass more than one call type, such as customer service, sales, and technical support (Aksin et al. 2007). In 2016, there were over a half million people working in call centers in the United States, not including those that work as independent contractors (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2016). There have been several studies that have researched call center agents. Many of these studies discussed later in this section were conducted with agents located outside the United States (see Deery et al., 2002; de Ruyter et al., 2001; Poddar & Madupalli, 2012; Rod & Ashill, 2013; Wallace et al., 2000). Due to the high levels of burnout, high turnover, and the cost associated with turnover, there is a need to find ways to reduce the likelihood of workers deciding to leave call center positions (Castanheira & Chambel, 2010; Hillmer et al., 2004; Poddar & Madupalli, 2012).

Many characteristics of call center agent jobs have been shown to be related to the core component of burnout: exhaustion. High workload, negative customer interactions, longer job tenure, and work tasks that lacked variety have been shown to negatively affect exhaustion level in call center agents (Deery et al., 2002). Customers' unreasonable demands and abuse have been shown to lead to exhaustion (Poddar & Madupalli, 2012). Poddar and Madupalli (2012) found that when job dissatisfaction was the result of customer abuse, call centers agents showed a stronger desire to leave the occupation rather than only the organization. Exhaustion has also been shown to be associated with

higher absenteeism rates among call center agents (et al., 2002). Deery et al. (2010) found that when there was a high job demand, supervisors with a permissive attitude towards call center agents being absent led to lower job strain. The results indicated that when call center workers took time away from work without the fear of repercussion it helped to reduce emotional exhaustion. Rod and Ashill (2013) did not find any differences in the effect of call center stressors (highly demanding customers, customer aggression, and performance monitoring) on emotional exhaustion (exhaustion) between inbound and outbound agents. However, there was a stronger negative relationship between the other two components of burnout, depersonalization (cynicism), and reduced personal accomplishment (professional efficacy), for inbound representatives compared to outbound representatives.

De Ruyter et al. (2001) conducted a study on the effect of role stress on employee performance and job satisfaction in call centers. The participants were insurance related in-bound and outbound call center agents performing customer service or marketing tasks at a brick-and-mortar location in New Zealand. De Ruyter et al. found that autonomy had a positive impact on role stress, job satisfaction had a positive impact on job performance, and that job satisfaction indirectly and directly had a positive influence on turnover intentions through organizational commitment. Add summary and synthesis throughout the paragraph to balance out the use of information from the literature with your own analysis

Call centers have been researched based on call centers accepting job burnout and turnover as a characteristic of the position. Wallace et al. (2000) conducted a multiple-

case analysis of the existence of sacrificial HR strategy used by four Australian call centers. The sacrificial HR strategy involves deliberately replacing current burnt out workers with newer staff members that are more motivated and enthusiastic. Rather than invest time and resources in minimizing the occurrence of employee burnout, the call centers accept the high levels of stress, burnout, and turnover of their agents as part of the position.

Research has investigated whether there was a relationship between workload, job conditions, compensation and benefits, and turnover in call centers. Khan and Du (2014) studied turnover intentions in call centers in Pakistan. The study found that there was a significant and positive relationship between workload and turnover intentions. The study also found that there was not a significant relationship between job conditions and turnover intentions or compensation and benefits and turnover intentions. Schalk and Van Rijckevorsel (2007) investigated the factors that influence absenteeism and the frequency of turnover intentions among call center agents. The study found that personal characteristics played a small role in absenteeism but had a larger impact on turnover intentions. Job characteristics had a small effect on absenteeism and turnover intentions. Workplace attitudes and the type of job contract (full-time/part-time, fixed/variable hours and permanent/temporary) had the greatest influence on the frequency of absenteeism and turnover intentions. The results indicated that the type of shift and job status of call center agents affected their turnover intentions.

Research has also investigated the knowledge and use of work-family policies, such as telecommuting, flextime, and wellness programs among call center agents.

Ramadoss (2013) conducted an exploratory study on the use of work-family policies and availability in call centers in India. The study revealed that job demand and work-family conflict had a significant positive relationship with employees' knowledge of work-family policies. There was also a significant positive relationship between job demands and the use of work-family policies. The results indicate that the higher job demands are the more likely call centers agents are to research the companies work-family policies and use them. Connell and Hannif (2009) conducted a comparative study based on empirical research of job content, working hours/work-life balance, managerial/supervisory style, and HR strategies between in-house and outsourced calls centers in Australia. The three quality of work life factors (job content, working hours/work-life balance, managerial/supervisory style) and the management model was found to be superior in the outsourced call center.

Telecommuting

Telecommuting is working outside of an organization's physical office (Golden et al., 2008). It often involves working from home, while using the Internet and telephone to communicate and submit work tasks. Telecommuting has been researched from a variety of aspects. Studies have investigated the impact of working remotely on employee outcomes. Gajendran and Harrison (2007) constructed a framework to guide their meta-analysis for determine the advantages and disadvantages of telecommuting and its psychological mediators. The study found that telecommuting had a minimal, but positive effect on perceived autonomy, and did not negatively impact the quality of workplace relationships. The study also found that telecommuting had distal positive effects on role

stress, turnover intent, job performance, and job satisfaction. O'Neill et al. (2009) conducted an exploratory study that involved comparing motivational, personality, situational, and job characteristics of telecommuters and nontelecommuters. The participants were from varying types of organizations in a city in Canada. Telecommuters reported having more children under the age of 18 than nontelecommuters. There was not a significant difference in the organization personality trait between telecommuters and nontelecommuters. The study found that more sociable telecommuters had lower self-rated job performance, while telecommuters with a higher need for autonomy had higher self-rated job performance. Telecommuters reported having greater job autonomy and less complex jobs than nontelecommuters. Add summary and synthesis throughout the paragraph to balance out the use of information from the literature with your own analysis to connect back to your study.

Telecommuting has been investigated from a cultural perspective. Navarrete and Pick (2003) studied the differences in the perception of organizational support for telecommuting and job satisfaction between the United States and Mexico. The results showed that there was no difference in job satisfaction between the United States and Mexico, while Mexico had more organizational support for telecommuting than the United States (Navarrete & Pick, 2003). The impact of coworker relationships on organizational commitment and job satisfaction has been investigated among high-intensity telecommuters. Fay and Kline (2011) found that there was a positive relationship between liking the coworker they interacted with most frequently and job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

The challenges of telecommuting have been investigated from a supervisor's perspective. Greer and Payne (2014) identified the challenges that prevent telecommuting from being effective and explored strategies for combating those challenges. The study found that the most reported challenge by supervisors was the lack of face-to-face communication. The most frequently reported strategy to overcome telecommuting challenges reported by telecommuters was the use of advanced technologies followed by the supervisor trying to be accessible. The role of distance on the supervisor and employee relationship has also been investigated. Brunelle (2013) investigated the impact of physical distance on the relationship between superiors and their subordinates, and the moderating effect of transformational leadership. The study found that physical distance and psychological distance negatively impacted the superior-subordinate relationship quality with the negative effects being mitigated by transformational leadership. Add summary and synthesis throughout the paragraph to connect back to your study.

Previous research has investigated the relationship between leadership style and telecommuting. Transformational leadership has been found to mediate the relationship between perceived control and perceptions of managers trust among telecommuters, but not for nontelecommuters (Kelley & Kelloway, 2012). Madlock (2012) investigated whether relational leadership style, task-oriented leadership style or communication style, lead to the most favorable outcomes for organizational commitment, job satisfaction, perception of supervisor's communication competence, and satisfaction with supervisor's communication for telecommuters. Madlock found that task-oriented leadership was the greatest predictor of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and communication

satisfaction. Similarly, Overbey (2013) examined the relationship between the perceived leadership styles of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire and the turnover intentions of telecommuters. The results showed that the more transformational leadership behaviors were exhibited the more the telecommuter desired to leave an organization, but the more laissez-faire behaviors were exhibited the less they desired to leave the organization. Overbey's study provided findings that show that transformational leadership style may have a negative influence on turnover intentions of telecommuters, while laissez-faire may have a positive influence implying that telecommuters may prefer a more hands-off approach. Salter et al. (2010) examined the relationship between implicit leadership, personality, and transformational leadership in a virtual communication setting. They found that participants that scored high on the Big 5 personality traits of openness to experience, agreeableness, extraversion, and conscientiousness rated supervisors as more transformational, while participants that scored high in neuroticism rated the leader as less transformational. Salter et al. study provided findings that show the role of personality traits in the perception of communication effectiveness of leaders in a virtual environment. Add summary and synthesis throughout the paragraph to balance out the use of information from the literature with your own analysis. Develop a strong conclusion.

There has also been research on the benefits of telecommuting. Sardeshmukh, Sharma, and Golden (2012) found that job demands and job resources partially mediated telecommuting's negative impact on job engagement and exhaustion. The study also found that there was a relationship between telecommuting and the reduced time pressure

of workers. In a related study, Fonner and Roloff (2010) found that high intensity telecommuters experienced more job satisfaction and benefited more from their work arrangement than office-based workers. The study also found that telecommuters reported reduced stress associated with meeting and interruptions, reduced perceived general politics, and less work-life conflict. Dutcher (2012) conducted an experiment that compared the effect of telecommuting on the productivity of creative and dull tasks. The dull task was a typing task that mimicked data entry work. The creative task involved thinking of unintended uses for common objects, which was completed on a website. The participants were 63 people in a lab and 62 people that was not in the lab. Participants were more productive completing the creative tasks away from the lab, while participants were less productive completing dull task away from the lab (Dutcher, 2012). The results suggest that telecommuting only results in higher productivity when tasks are not dull. Bélanger (1999) sought to identify what factors influence workers to telecommute. Telecommuters reported greater personal control but did not report greater productivity or job satisfaction than nontelecommuters. DuBRIN (1991) determined that job satisfaction and productivity tended to be higher among telecommuters than office-based workers when the work involves structured and repetitive tasks.

Bloom et al. (2014) investigated the benefits and cost of working from home among Chinese call center agents. Call center agents that volunteered to work from home were randomly assigned to either work from home or in the brick-and-mortar location for 9 months. Prior to the beginning of the experiment the call center did not have a telecommuting program. After implementing the program, the work at home agents

showed an increase in performance, the amount of calls handled per minute, and job satisfaction. The call center used in the experiment had 50 percent turnover per year on average, which is typical for call centers in China (Bloom et al., 2014). The work from home agents in the study showed less turnover. A possible cause of the positive results of the telecommuting agents could have been due to the Hawthorne effect, where the agents may have had put forth extra effort in hopes that the company would decide to make the telecommuting program permanent of which the company did decide to keep (Bloom et al., 2014).

Job Burnout

The three components of job burnout are depersonalization (cynicism), emotional exhaustion (exhaustion), and reduced personal accomplishment (professional efficacy) that occur because of continual job stress (Choi, Cheong, & Feinberg, 2012; Maslach et al., 1997). Depersonalization (cynicism) involves psychologically disconnecting from the workplace as a method of avoiding psychological strain (Lee & Ashforth, 1990). Emotional exhaustion (exhaustion) is when a worker feels physically and psychologically drained. Reduced personal accomplishment (professional efficacy) is when a worker perceive that they are less effective at their job and their job performance suffers (Lee & Ashforth, 1990).

Prior research has established the existence of job burnout among employees in call centers. D'Alleo and Santangelo (2011) found that there was a significant relationship between the organizational climate of call centers and job burnout. While the organizational climate of the call center was sufficient overall, the poorly perceived

qualities of the organizational climate included autonomy, work involvement, work pressure and stress. The study also found that there was a significant relationship between the representatives' emotional exhaustion (exhaustion) and high job strain. Representatives were also shown to experience a high level of job burnout. Choi, Cheong, and Feinberg (2012) examined moderators of job burnout among call center agents. They found that depersonalization (cynicism), emotional exhaustion (exhaustion), and reduced personal accomplishment (professional efficacy) accounted for 35% of call center agents' turnover intentions. There was a weak relationship between reduced personal accomplishment and turnover intentions. Monetary rewards, supervisor support, and career paths did not mitigate the negative effect of all three components of job burnout and turnover intentions.

Healy and Bramble (2003) conducted a mixed-method that explored job burnout in a call center in Australia. Healy and Bramble (2003) compared their burnout results to eight prior burnout studies on call center representatives, welfare workers, mental health workers, nurses, lawyers, medical residents, teachers and childcare workers and found that only childcare workers and lawyers had higher rates of emotional exhaustion (exhaustion) than the call center workers in their study, while having the lowest rate of depersonalization (cynicism). Healy and Bramble (2003) attributed a large amount of the job burnout of call center agents to the remoteness of using a telephone to communicate with customers, repetitiveness of the tasks performed, the variety of customer demands, the prevalence of statistical and call monitoring by management and the emotional labor required to interact with customers. Ashill et al. (2009) investigated the role of job

resourcefulness on the relationship between role stressors (role ambiguity, role conflict and role overload), two symptoms of burnout (emotional exhaustion and depersonalization) and frontline employees' performance in dealing with issues involving dissatisfied customers. The participants worked at a call center in New Zealand. Job resourcefulness was found to moderate the relationship of role stressors dysfunctional effect on burnout, and role stressors dysfunctional effect on frontline employees' performance in dealing with issues involving dissatisfied customers (Ashill et al., 2009).

Huang, Chan, Lam, and Nan (2010) studied the effect of leader–member exchange and emotional intelligence on burnout and job performance among call center agents in China. They found a significant negative relationship between leader-member exchange and burnout, but there was not a significant relationship with job performance (Huang, Chan, Lam, & Nan, 2010). They also found that leader-member exchange benefited job performance among call center agents who had low levels of emotional intelligence.

Job burnout has been investigated in a variety of professions. Professionals in the banking industry with direct contact with customers at commercial bank locations had a higher risk of burnout than workers in central services (Amigo et al., 2014). Exhaustion, which is considered the core dimension of burnout syndrome, had the most number of workers showing a high risk in comparison to cynicism and professional efficacy Jung et al. (2012) studied the relationship between employees' perception of burnout, role stress, and turnover intention among culinary employees at a hotel in Korea. Workers that reported less role stress reported lower levels of job burnout. Among participants, higher

levels of burnout were connected to higher turnover intentions (Jung et al., 2012). Lu and

Gursoy (2016) examined the differences in generations (Baby Boomers, Generation X,

Millennials) moderating effect on the relationship between job burnout, employee

satisfaction, and turnover intention at a hotel managed by a North American company.

They found that emotionally exhausted Millennials had lower job satisfaction and higher

turnover intention than emotionally exhausted Baby Boomers (Lu & Gursoy, 2016). Gill

et al. (2006) sought to determine whether transformational leadership had an impact on

job stress and if the resulting job stress had an impact on burnout. The study found that

higher levels of perceived transformational leadership was associated with lower levels of

job stress. It was also determined that higher perceived levels of job stress were

associated with higher levels of burnout.

Goodman and Boss (2002) investigated the relationship of the phase model of

burnout to hospital turnover. In the phase model of burnout, each component of burnout

is broken into levels of phases from one to eight with people in phase one experiencing

low levels of burnout and those in phase eight experiencing high levels of burnout.

Employees that left the organization had higher burnout phase scores than those that

stayed. There was not a significant different in scores between involuntary and voluntary

turnover. Huang, Chuang, and Lin (2003) investigated whether burnout mediated the

relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and turnover intentions. The

results indicated that only emotional exhaustion (exhaustion) and cynicism resulted in

higher turnover intentions with emotional exhaustion having the strongest effect, so

burnout only partially mediated the relationship between perceptions of perceptions of organizational politics and turnover intentions.

Turnover Intentions

Turnover intention is an employee's intent to voluntarily quit their job oppose to actual turnover, which may include leaving an organization for variety of reasons including involuntary turnover (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999). Prior research has investigated turnover among telecommuters. Igbaria and Guimaraes (1999) found that telecommuters had significantly lower role conflict and role ambiguity, were more satisfied with supervision and their work, had higher job satisfaction, and lower turnover intentions than nontelecommuters. The study also found that nontelecommuters were more satisfied with promotion and coworkers than telecommuters. Golden (2006) examined the intervening role of work exhaustion on the relationship between organizational commitment and turnover intentions among telecommuters. The results of the study showed that the more an employee telecommuted the more committed they were to the organization, and that they also had less turnover intentions. The study also found that work exhaustion mediated the relationship between both telecommuting and turnover intentions, and telecommuting and organizational commitment.

Researchers have investigated turnover in call centers. Ming Benjamin Siong, Mellor, Moore, and Firth (2006) tested a workplace turnover model developed for the retail industry to determine its applicability to the call center industry. The study found that the combined stressors of role conflict, work family conflict, role ambiguity, and work overload of call center representatives had a greater negative impact on satisfaction

support and stress than of retail workers. The combination of support, satisfaction and stress had a greater total effect on turnover intentions for call center representatives than retail workers, but support, satisfaction and stress individually had a lesser impact on turnover intentions than retail workers. Kraemer and Gouthier (2014) found that emotional exhaustion (exhaustion) and low organizational pride resulted in higher turnover intentions in German call centers. There was no significant difference in the effect of work interruptions and job pressure on emotional exhaustion between women and men. There also was no difference in the effect of organizational pride and emotional exhaustion on turnover intentions between women and men. Job routinization's effect on emotional exhaustion was stronger among men. Team support's effect on organizational pride was stronger for women. Employees with longer job tenure showed that job pressure had a stronger effect on emotional exhaustion, and supervisor consideration and team support had a stronger effect on organization pride than employees with shorter tenures. Batt and Colvin (2011) examined the relationship between the dimensions of employment systems (high involvement work organization, investment and inducements practices, and performance enhancing practices) and customer service, dismissals and resignations in the call center industry. Higher rates of resignations and dismissals were associated with lower levels of customer service. While short-term performance enhancing practices component of employment systems was related to higher dismissal and resignation rates, high involvement work organization and long-term investment and inducements were related to lower dismissal and resignation rates. Flint et al. (2013) used the social exchange theory to determine the impact of interpersonal and procedural justice

on turnover intentions using three call centers in New Brunswick, Canada. Organizational commitment only partially mediated the effect of procedural justice on turnover intentions. Organizational commitment fully mediated the effect of supervisory commitment on turnover intentions. Li and Zhou (2013) investigated the impact of customer verbal aggression on turnover intentions and the mediating role of emotional exhaustion (exhaustion) using two call centers in Southern and Central China. Customer verbal aggression was found to predict turnover intention. Emotional exhaustion mediated the relationship between customer verbal aggression and turnover intentions.

Idris (2014) conducted an exploratory study focused on the Malaysian bank industry using flexible working arrangements, such as flex time, flex place, job sharing and flex career as a method to retain employees. Flex time, which allows for a slight modification of hours was shown to have positive impact on employee retentions. Participants of the study did not know enough about flex career to determine its impact. Malaysia has an inflexible bank system with rigid hours, so flex leave, flex place, and job sharing was not suggested to employees (Idris, 2014). Idris (2014) determined that the implementation and effect of a flexible working arrangement on employee retention was dependent on organization and socio-economic factors.

Arshadi and Damiri (2013) investigated the relationship between job stress, and turnover intention and job performance among employees of the Iranian National Drilling Company. The moderating role of organization-based self-esteem was also investigated. Job stress was found to have a negative impact on job performance and a positive impact

on turnover intentions. Organization-based self-esteem moderated the relationship between job stress and both job performance and turnover intentions.

Summary and Conclusions

Call center agents perceive a high level of stress and work pressure (D'Alleo & Santangelo, 2011). Research has shown that there is a significant relationship between job burnout and turnover intentions (Du Plooy & Roodt, 2010; Kim & Stoner, 2008; Oyeleye, Hanson, O'Connor, & Dunn, 2013; Zhang & Feng, 2011). Research has also shown that there are instances where telecommuter have lower turnover intentions (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007; Golden, 2006). Determining whether there was a relationship between telecommuting, and job burnout and turnover intentions among call center agents aided in determining whether telecommuting could be one of the tools used in minimizing job burnout and turnover among call center agents. A quantitative study utilizing a comparative survey design with telecommuting and non-telecommuting call center agents was useful in determining whether there is a relationship between telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intentions. Chapter 3 will include information on how this quantitative study utilizing a comparative survey design will be conducted, including methodology and measurement instruments.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this quantitative study was to determine if telecommuting is associated with job burnout and turnover intentions among call center agents. Chapter 3 covers the research design, participants, instruments, data collection, data analysis, threats to validity, ethical considerations and concludes with a summary. The participant section will cover the characteristics of the population for this study. The participant section will include descriptions of the measurement tools used in this study. The data collection and analysis plan will then be discussed.

Research Design and Rationale

The nature of this study was quantitative. The independent variable was telecommuting. The dependent variables were turnover intentions and the three components of job burnout (exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy). A comparative survey design was used to examine possible differences in job burnout and turnover intentions between telecommuting and nontelecommuting call center agents. A comparative survey design allows for inferences and comparisons based on the quantitative data collected from the sample of telecommuting and nontelecommuting call center agents (see Creswell, 2014).

Methodology

Population

The target population for this study was call center agents in the United States. The participants were full- and part-time telecommuting and nontelecommuting employees currently working at call centers using voice communication channels in the

United States. There are approximately 2,595,990 call center employees in the United States (JLL Research, 2017).

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

A nonprobability convenience sample was used. Sometimes a convenience sample is the only method that can be used in natural groups, such as organizations and volunteers (Creswell, 2014). I selected convenience sampling because the number of participants was limited to the number of participants that volunteer to participate that meet criteria. A power analysis for MANOVA to calculate sample size was performed using G*Power 3.1 software (Faul et al., 2009). Previous research has reported an effect size of .15 when examining turnover intentions among call center agents (Bonds, 2017). To calculate sample size, an effect size of .15 (a medium effect size), an alpha level of .05, a power level of .95, one independent variable (two groups), and four dependent variables were used. The results were a recommended sample size of 148.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Originally, all participants were expected to work for a single call center in the United States. However, I was unable to gain approval from any of the call centers contacted. The survey vendor was Survey Monkey (http://www.surveymonkey.com). A survey invitation was posted to Facebook groups with members that included call center agents. An explanation of the study, the participants' right and ability to not participate in the study or to exit the study at any point by closing the survey screen was on the first page. Since this was an online survey there was not a signed consent form. Implied consent was obtained through the submission of the online survey. At the end of the online survey, the

researcher's name and email was listed in case participants have questions about the

study. There was not any requirement for follow-up.

<div align="center">**Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs**</div>

Maslach Burnout Inventory

Job burnout was measured using the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General

Survey (MBI-GS) developed by Maslach et al. (1996). The original Maslach Burnout

Inventory – Human Services Survey (MBI-HSS) was developed to measure burnout

among human services and healthcare workers by Maslach and Jackson (1981). The

MBI-GS is a general version of the MBI that is not specific to any occupation (Maslach

et al., 1996). The MBI-GS measures the same dimensions as the original MBI-HSS. In

the MBI-GS, the names of the dimensions are replaced with broader terms. Exhaustion is

replaced with emotional exhaustion. Depersonalization is replaced with cynicism.

Reduced personal accomplishment is replaced with professional efficacy. This 22-item

instrument is a widely used tool for measuring the three components of job burnout:

exhaustion, cynicism, and professional efficacy. The emotional exhaustion (exhaustion)

subscale measures the participant's feeling of being exhausted and emotionally extended

by their work (Maslach et al., 1996). The depersonalization (cynicism) subscale measures

the participant's impersonal and unfeeling response to their customers, patients, or

students. The reduced personal accomplishment (professional efficacy) subscale

measures the participant's feelings of achievement and competence with their work with

people. The responses are given on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 ("never") to 6 ("every

day"). Sample items include "Working with people directly puts too much stress on me"

and "I feel burned out from my work" (Maslach et al., 1996). Research has reported

satisfactory levels of internal consistency among the subscales (Maslach et al., 1996).

The emotional exhaustion subscale consists of nine items with a Cronbach's alpha of .90.

The depersonalization subscale consists of five items with a Cronbach's alpha of .79. The

reduced personal accomplishment subscale has been found to have good test-retest

reliability over 2-4-week intervals for all scales, with correlations ranging from 0.60 to

0.82 (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Maslach et al. established convergent validity by

determining there was a correlation between the MBI scores and independent behavior

ratings by people that knew the participants well. Participants whose coworkers rated

them as being physically fatigued and emotionally drained showed significantly higher

levels of depersonalization and emotional exhaustion on the MBI. The relationship

between job characteristics and burnout was confirmed by a survey of public contact

workers, which showed that those with very large caseloads had high levels of

depersonalization and emotional exhaustion and low levels of personal accomplishment.

Discriminant validity was determined by differentiating the MBI from other

measurements of constructs that may have a confounded relationship with burnout

(Maslach et al., 1996). To establish that the MBI scores were not distorted because some

of the items on the assessment describe feelings that may conflict with professional

ideals, graduate students took both the MBIand Crowne-Marlowe (1964) Social

Desirability Scale, which showed that there was no correlation between the scores on

both assessments.

Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire

Turnover intentions were measured using the three item Turnover Intention

subscale from the widely used Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire (see

Cammann et al., 1979). The three items of the subscale are "How likely is it that you will

actively look for a new job in the next year," "I often think about quitting," and "I will

probably look for a new job in the next year". The responses are given on a 7-point scale

ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree"). Several studies examined

the reliability and validity of the Turnover Intention subscale from the Michigan

Organizational Assessment Questionnaire. All the studies below reported internal

consistency values above .70 for the Turnover Intention subscale (see Nunnally, 1978).

The sample used by Jonathan et al. (2013) consisted of public secondary school teachers

and they reported a Cronbach's alpha of .86. The purpose of their study was to

investigate turnover intentions among teachers. The variables were intention to leave,

affective commitment, continuance commitment and normative commitment. The study

also provided construct validity for the Turnover Intention subscale. Jonathan et al. found

that teachers with higher continuance, affective and normative commitment had

significantly lower turnover intention. The sample used by Feng and Angeline (2010)

consisted of music teachers from private music schools and reported a high internal

consistency of .90. The purpose of their study was to examine the extent of the

relationship between turnover intention and job-hopping behavior, and emotional

exhaustion, perceived organizational support, job satisfaction, and affective commitment.

The study also provided construct validity for the Turnover Intention subscale. Feng and

Angeline (2010) found that turnover intention was positively correlated with emotional exhaustion, and negatively correlated with job satisfaction and affective commitment of music teachers. The sample used by Jung et al. (2012) consisted of hotel employees and reported a high internal consistency of .94. The purpose of their study was to examine the relationship between employees' perception of burnout, role stress, and turnover intention. The variables were role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, exhaustion, cynicism, non-accomplishment, and turnover intent. The study also provided construct validity for the Turnover Intention subscale. Jung et al. found that employees with high levels of burnout had significantly higher turnover intent. They also found that burnout among employees that worked less than 10 years resulted in significantly higher turnover intent, but burnout had no effect on turnover intent for employees that worked more than 10 years. The sample used by Khatri et al. (1999) consisted of employees in the manufacturing and services industry in Singapore and they reported a Cronbach's alpha of .87. The purpose of their study was to investigate the antecedents of turnover intention in companies located in Singapore. The variables consisted of uncontrollable factors (job-hopping and perceived alternative employment opportunities), controllable factors (satisfaction with pay, satisfaction with nature of work, satisfaction with supervision, organizational commitment, distributive justice, and procedural justice) and demographic factors (age, gender, level of education, tenure, level of income, job title). The study also provided construct validity for the Turnover Intention subscale. Khatri et al. found that controllable factors contributed to turnover intention more than uncontrollable factors with demographic factors having the least impact on turnover intention.

Data Analysis Plan

The software SPSS 25 was used for data analyses. The statistical analysis included tests to validate the assumptions of a one-way MANOVA. Analyses was done to test that there are no univariate or multivariate outliers, no multicollinearity, multivariate normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variance. Descriptive statistics was used to describe the data. Interferential statistics was used to test the hypotheses and draw conclusions about the population from the sample.

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent is telecommuting associated with the exhaustion component of job burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey exhaustion subscale, among call center agents?

   H_0: There is no significant difference in the level of exhaustion between non-telecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

   H_1: There is a significant difference in the level of exhaustion between non-telecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

RQ2: To what extent is telecommuting associated with the cynicism component of job burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory - General Survey cynicism subscale, among call center agents?

   H_0: There is no significant difference in the level of cynicism between non-telecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

   H_1: There is a significant difference in the level of cynicism between non-telecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

RQ3: To what extent is telecommuting associated with the professional efficacy

component of job burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory - General

Survey professional efficacy subscale, among call center agents?

H_0: There is no significant difference in the level of professional efficacy

between non-telecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

H_1: There is a significant difference in the level of professional efficacy between

non-telecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

RQ4: To what extent is telecommuting associated with turnover intentions, as measured

by the turnover intention subscale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment

Questionnaire, among call center agents?

H_0: There is no significant difference in the level of turnover intentions between

non-telecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

H_1: There is a significant difference in the level of turnover intentions between

non-telecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

Threats to Validity

One threat to external validity was the selection of participants. This study used a

convenience sample instead of a random sampling. Convenience sampling has lower

external validity because characteristics of the participants may not be equally distributed

and representative of the entire population (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). To

minimize this threat, I attempted to collect data from a diverse sample of call center

agents so that my data is generalizable. Another threat to external validity is a low

response. This threat was eliminated by posting survey invitations to the Facebook

groups every week for almost 3 months. Another threat to internal validity is the difference in the way the survey is displayed on different devices. Display effects is equated to interviewer effects (Wiersma, 2013). The differences in how the survey is displayed on the screen may affect how the questions are interpreted similar to how differences in an interviewer may affect a participant's response. Another threat to internal validity is that participants' job burnout may be caused from other aspects of their job that is unrelated to telecommuting. For example, perceptions of role stress have been shown to have a significant positive relationship with burnout and turnover intentions (Jung et al., 2012).

Ethical Considerations

Permission for this study was be requested from Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) using an IRB application. The IRB application included foreseeable risks and benefits of participating in this study and the fact that participation is voluntary and confidential. There were minimal ethical risks for this study. There may be minor discomforts that can be encountered in daily life, such as thinking about one's own levels of stress and job burnout if these types of thoughts make the participant uncomfortable. Participants were directed to contact https://www.mentalhealth.gov/get-help/immediate-help, which contains resources for finding counseling services, if they experienced any adverse effects. Participants completed the online survey anonymously. During informed consent, participants was informed about the anonymity of their responses.

Summary

Chapter 3 included a discussion of the research design and methodology that will be used is to determine whether telecommuting has an impact on job burnout and the turnover intentions of call center agents. This will be a quantitative study utilizing a comparative survey design. The independent variable is telecommuting. The four dependent variables are turnover intentions and the three components of job burnout (exhaustion, cynicism and professional efficacy). The target population was call center agents in the United States. A survey invitation was posted to Facebook groups with members that included call center agents. A nonprobability convenience sample was used. Chapter 4 will include the data collection process and results.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this quantitative study is to determine if telecommuting is associated with job burnout and turnover intentions among call center agents. This chapter will review the data collection process and provide the results of the statistical tests conducted in this study. The following research questions and hypotheses were examined:

RQ1: To what extent is telecommuting associated with the exhaustion component of job burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory exhaustion subscale, among call center agents?

$H_0 1$: There is no significant difference in the level of exhaustion between nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

$H_1 1$: There is a significant difference in the level of exhaustion between nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

RQ2: To what extent is telecommuting associated with the cynicism component of job burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory cynicism subscale, among call center agents?

$H_0 2$: There is no significant difference in the level of cynicism between nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

$H_1 2$: There is a significant difference in the level of cynicism between non-telecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

RQ3: To what extent is telecommuting associated with the professional efficacy component of job burnout, as measured by the Maslach Burnout Inventory professional efficacy subscale, among call center agents?

$H_0$3: There is no significant difference in the level of professional efficacy between nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

$H_1$3: There is a significant difference in the level of professional efficacy between nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

RQ4: To what extent is telecommuting associated with turnover intentions, as measured by the turnover intention subscale from the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire, among call center agents?

$H_0$4: There is no significant difference in the level of turnover intentions between nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

$H_1$4: There is a significant difference in the level of turnover intentions between nontelecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

Data Collection

The sample for this study was telecommuting and nontelecommuting call center agents in the United States. These call center agents worked full- and part-time with their current organization for at least 6 months. Originally, all participants were expected to work for a single call center in the United States. However, I was unable to gain approval from any of the call centers contacted. The survey vendor was Survey Monkey. A survey invitation was posted to Facebook groups with members that included call center agents. The response rate for this study was not able to be calculated since the Facebook groups

also allowed members that were not call center workers, and new members joined and

left the group daily. Survey data was collected over a period of almost 3 months (January

13 to April 4, 2020). The approved Walden University IRB study number was 01-09-20-

0515521.

Table 1 displays the frequency counts for the demographic variables in the study.

Data was not collected on age, gender, or ethnicity.

Table 1

Frequency Table for Participant Demographic Variables

Category	Telecommuting		Nontelecommuting	
	n	%	*n*	%
Full-time	31	30.7	70	69.3
Part-time	32	62.7	19	37.3
6 months to 1 year	18	32.7	37	67.3
1 to 2 years	28	41.8	39	58.2
over 2 years	17	56.7	13	43.3
Total	63	41.4	89	58.6

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The means and standards deviations for the three subscales of the MBI-GS

(assessed components of job burnout) and the turnover intentions subscale of the

Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire are shown in Table 2. There were

three subscales on the Maslach Burnout Inventory-GS (exhaustion, cynicism, professional efficacy). The exhaustion subscale scores ranged from 0 to 6, with an average of 3.26 (SD = 1.57). The cynicism subscale scores ranged from 0 to 6, with an average of 3.17 (SD = 1.53). The professional efficacy subscale scores ranged from 0.50 to 6, with an average of 3.97 (SD = 1.21). The turnover intentions subscale scores range from 1 to 7, with an average of 4.08 (SD = 1.72). Table 2 also provides the psychometric characteristics for the summated scale scores for the three subscales of the MBI-GS and the turnover intentions subscale of the Michigan Organizational Assessment Questionnaire. The Cronbach alpha coefficients ranged from α = .83 to α = .92. The range suggested that all scales had adequate levels of internal reliability (Cronbach, 1951).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Job-Burnout and Turnover Intentions

Subscale	M	SD	Min.	Max	Cronbach's alpha
Exhaustion	3.26	1.57	0.00	6.00	.92
Cynicism	3.17	1.53	0.00	6.00	.86
Professional Efficacy	3.97	1.21	0.50	6.00	.83
Turnover Intention	4.08	1.72	1.00	7.00	.88

Evaluation of Statistical Assumptions

There were 152 people that completed the survey, which exceeded the recommended sample of size of 148. There were no univariate and multivariate outliers in the data, as assessed by inspection of a boxplot and the Mahalanobis distance (p > .001; Appendix A). Table 3 shows the normal distribution of skewness and kurtosis for the subscales of exhaustion, cynicism, professional efficacy, and turnover intention. .

The following statistical assumptions were analyzed and reported for the one-way

MANOVA: multivariate normality, linearity, and homogeneity of variances. There was

multivariate normality for telecommuting and nontelecommuting, as assessed by visual

inspection of Normal Q-Q Plots. The assumption of linearity was met, as assessed by

scatterplots (Figure 1 and Figure 2). For the one-way MANOVA model, there was no

homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test of homogeneity of variance ($p <$

.05). Only turnover intentions and professional efficacy was at ($p > .05$). There was no

homogeneity of variance-covariances, as assessed by Box's test of equality of covariance

matrices ($p < .001$). Thus, the assumption of homogeneity of variances and variance-

covariances was not met. Although the assumption of homogeneity of variances and

variance-covariances was not met, the one-way MANOVA is a robust test even when

assumptions are violated.

Table 3

Results of the Normality Testing for Subscales

Subscale	Statistic	df	p	Skewness	Kurtosis
Exhaustion				-.38	-.39
Telecommuting	.93	63	.00		
Non-Telecommuting	.98	89	.30		
Cynicism				-.14	-.45
Telecommuting	.95	63	.02		
Non-Telecommuting	.98	89	.31		
Professional Efficacy				-.05	-.44
Telecommuting	.96	63	.02		
Non-Telecommuting	.98	89	.09		
Turnover Intention				-.17	-.94
Telecommuting	.95	63	.01		
Non-Telecommuting	.97	89	.02		

Figure 1

Scatterplot for Telecommuting

Scatterplot: Exhaustion, Cynicism, Professional Efficacy and Turnover Intention
Telecommuting
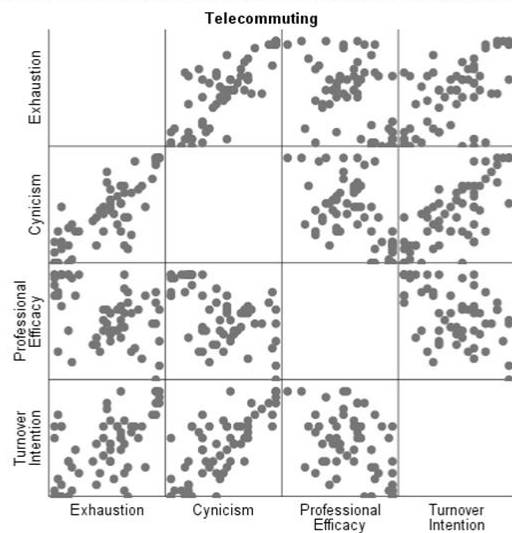
Figure 2

Scatterplot for Nontelecommunting

Scatterplot: Exhaustion, Cynicism, Professional Efficacy and Turnover Intention
Non-Telecommuting
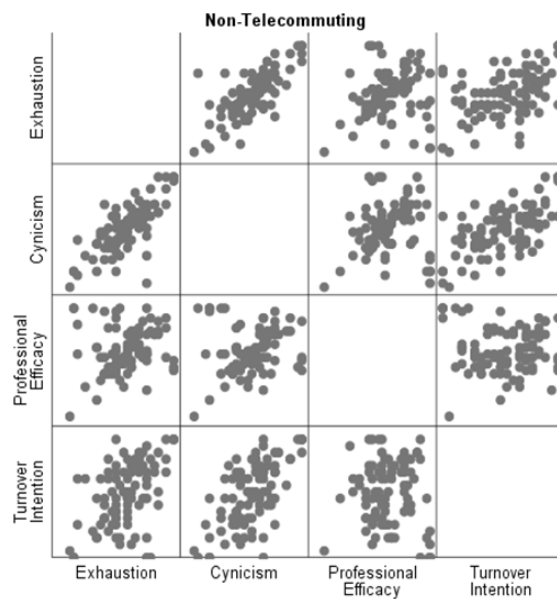
Multivariate Analysis of Variance

A one-way MANOVA was conducted to determine if there were significant differences in job burnout (cynicism, exhaustion, professional efficacy) and turnover intentions (dependent variables) between telecommuting and non-telecommuting call center agents (independent variable). There was no significant difference between telecommuting and non-telecommuting on the combined dependent variables, $F(4, 147) =$ 1.833, $p > .05$; Pillai's Trace V = .048; partial η^2 = .048.

When examining the tests of between-subjects effects, there was a statistically significant difference in exhaustion between telecommuters and nontelecommuters, $F(1, 150) = 6.175$, $p = .014$; partial η^2 = .040. Nontelecommuters reported higher exhaustion (M = 3.51, SD = 1.21) than telecommuters (M = 2.89, SD = 1.91). Therefore, the null hypothesis for the first research question was rejected. There was a statistically significant difference in cynicism between telecommuters and nontelecommuters, $F(1, 150) = 5.430$, $p = .021$; partial η^2 = .035. Nontelecommuters reported higher cynicism (M = 3.41, SD = 1.24) than telecommuters (M = 2.83, SD = 1.82). Therefore, the null hypothesis for the second research question was rejected. There was not a statistically significant difference in professional efficacy between telecommuters (M = 4.14, SD =1.31) and nontelecommuters (3.86, SD = 1.14), $F(1, 150) = 1.997$, $p = .160$; partial η^2 = .013. Therefore, the null hypothesis for the third research question was not rejected. There was not a statistically significant difference in turnover intentions between telecommuters (M = 4.25, SD = 1.64) and nontelecommuters (M = 3.84, SD = 1.83), $F(1,$

150) = 2.058, p = .153; partial η^2 = .014. Therefore, the null hypothesis for the fourth research question was not rejected.

Summary

This study surveyed 152 telecommuting and non-telecommuting call center agents to determine if telecommuting is associated with job burnout (cynicism, exhaustion, professional efficacy) and turnover intentions among call center agents. The results demonstrated that there was a significant difference in exhaustion and cynicism between telecommuting and non-telecommuting call center agents. Nontelecommuters reported higher exhaustion and cynicism than telecommuters. However, no statistically significant results were found for professional efficacy and turnover intentions. In Chapter 5, these findings are interpreted with references to research literature and the research questions. Conclusions and implications of the results will be presented, as well as recommendations for future study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this study was to determine if telecommuting is associated with job burnout and turnover intentions among call center agents. While there has been research on the sometimes difficult nature of call center work and the high turnover they continue to experience, research has not addressed the relationship between telecommuting and the three components of the Maslach burnout theory among call center agents (Aksin et al., 2007; Khan & Du, 2014). The nature of call center work not requiring in-person customer interaction, and advancement in technology, allowing remote hiring, training, and supervision enables call center agent positions to be well-suited for telecommuting (Reynolds, 2010). Telecommuting was chosen as a variable in this study because of call center jobs suitability for working remotely and previous research indicating its association with lower turnover intentions (Golden, 2006).

A one-way MANOVA was used to analyze the data with one independent variable being telecommuting (telecommuting agents, nontelecommuting agents). There were four dependent variables being job burnout (cynicism, exhaustion, professional efficacy) and turnover intentions. The results demonstrated that there were no significant differences between telecommuting and nontelecommuting on the combined dependent variables. There was a statistically significant difference in exhaustion and cynicism between telecommuters and nontelecommuters. That is, nontelecommuters reported significantly higher levels of exhaustion and cynicism. There was no statistically significant difference in professional efficacy or turnover intentions between telecommuters and nontelecommuters.

Interpretation of the Findings

Job Burnout

In RQ1, I examined whether there was a significant difference in the level of exhaustion telecommuting and nontelecommuting call center agents. The findings of this study showed that there was a statistically significant difference in exhaustion between telecommuting and nontelecommuting call center agents. This result demonstrated a negative correlation between exhaustion and telecommuting. That is, call center agents that telecommuted had significantly lower levels of exhaustion than nontelecommuting call center agents. The results of this study align with previous research on emotional exhaustion and telecommuting. Research has shown that the nature of call center work, which often involves repetitive types of calls, and irate customers that are sometimes verbally abusive contributes to the emotional exhaustion of call center employees (Deery et al., 2002).

The literature defines exhaustion, which is sometimes referred to as emotional exhaustion, as a worker feeling physically and psychologically drained (Lee & Ashforth, 1990; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Emotional exhaustion has been shown to predict turnover intentions (Feng & Angeline, 2010; Lingard, 2003). Knudsen et al. (2006) examined counselors in therapeutic communities and found a significant positive relationship between emotional exhaustion and turnover intentions. A significant positive relationship was also found to exist among workers at a large hospital (Cropanzano et al., 2003). Wright and Cropanzano (1998) in their longitudinal study involving social welfare workers, found a significant positive relationship between emotional exhaustion and

workers going beyond intent by voluntarily quitting. Finally, Golden's (2006) study involving professional level telecommuters at an internet solution company found that telecommuters reported lower turnover intentions and that emotional exhaustion mediated the relationship between telecommuting and turnover intentions.

Cynicism

In RQ2, I examined whether there was a significant difference in the level of cynicism between telecommuting and non-telecommuting call center agents. The findings of this study showed that there was a statistically significant difference in cynicism between telecommuting and nontelecommuting call center agents. This result demonstrated a negative correlation between cynicism and telecommuting. That is, call center agents that telecommuted had significantly lower levels of cynicism than nontelecommuting call center agents. The results of this study align with previous research on the cynicism component of burnout theory. Amigo et al. (2014) found that cynicism and exhaustion were the strongest predictors of burnout among workers in the banking sector. In addition, Leiter and Maslach (2009) found that cynicism predicted turnover intentions and mediated the workplace factors that effected turnover intentions among nurses.

The literature defines cynicism, which is sometimes referred to as depersonalization, as avoiding psychological strain by psychologically disconnecting from the workplace (Lee & Ashforth, 1990; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Rod and Ashill (2013) studied call center agents in a retail bank and found a direct positive relationship between call center stressors and depersonalization (cynicism). In a study involving civil

engineers, Lingard (2003) reported that cynicism was a significant predictor of turnover intentions. Another study involving agents at seven different call centers found that depersonalization led to significantly higher turnover (Choi et al., 2012). They also found that emotional exhaustion led to a significant increase in depersonalization. This supports the theory that exhaustion is the core component of burnout and has a significant relationship with cynicism. In my study, this may explain why both exhaustion and cynicism were significantly related to telecommuting, while professional efficacy was not.

Professional Efficacy

In RQ3, I examined whether there was a significant difference in the level of professional efficacy between telecommuting and nontelecommuting call center agents. The findings of this study showed that there was not a significant difference in professional efficacy among telecommuting and non-telecommuting call center agents.

The literature defines professional efficacy, which is sometimes referred to as reduced personal accomplishment, as a worker perceiving that they are less effective at their job and the resulting poor job performance (Lee & Ashforth, 1990; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The results of this study align with previous research on burnout that show that exhaustion is the core component of burnout with cynicism being a stronger component than professional efficacy (Amigo et al., 2014). Amigo et al. (2014) looked at workers in the banking sector and found that female workers along with employees with less than 10 years of service and under the age of 35 had significantly higher levels of professional efficacy. A combination of factors, such as age, gender, and length of

employment could possibly reveal significant differences in results. Their study also found that workers in the branch offices had lower professional efficacy than workers in central services. This showed that some factors related to job location may contribute to the level of professional efficacy. In a study on burnout and turnover intentions of nurses, Leiter and Maslach (2009) reported that professional efficacy was not related to turnover intentions. They found that workers not feeling involved in their work (cynicism) was the primary factor for turnover intentions among nurses. This potential lack of relationship between professional efficacy may explain why there was no significant difference between telecommuting and non-telecommuting call center agents in the present study. Rod and Ashill (2013) compared inbound and outbound call center agents in a retail bank and found that the impact of depersonalization (cynicism) on reduced personal accomplishment (professional efficacy) was stronger with inbound agents. My study did not collect data on call type, but this may be a factor that affected the relationship between professional efficacy and telecommuting.

Turnover Intentions

In RQ4, I examined whether there was a significant difference in the level of turnover intentions between telecommuting and nontelecommuting call center agents. The findings of this study showed that there was not a significant difference in turnover intentions among telecommuting and nontelecommuting call center agents.

The literature defines turnover intentions as an employee's intent to voluntarily leave their job (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999). Much research has shown that burnout has a significant impact on turnover intentions (Weisberg, 1994; Woo et al., 2019). Studies

have also shown that telecommuters report lower turnover intentions than nontelecommuters (Igbaria & Guimaraes, 1999). My study included workers at a variety of companies that were likely to handle varied call types. Differences in call types could have resulted in different levels of exposure to factors that lead to burnout and its relationship with turnover intentions and telecommuting, which may explain why there was not significant difference between telecommuting and nontelecommuting agents in the current study. Sims (2007) reported a significant relationship between job boredom, work pressure, poor pay, working excessive hours and turnover intentions among workers at isolated ski resorts. The study also found that different job types within resorts reported different levels of turnover intentions, and that younger employees were significantly more likely to report turnover intentions. A study testing the generalizability of the results of a turnover intention model developed in the retail sector to the call center industry found that while both industries had similar results, stressors had a stronger role in turnover intentions (Ming Benjamin Siong et al., 2006). This study supports the theory that people working at different physical locations and types of companies may experience different stressors, which may impact the resulting relationship between turnover intentions and telecommuting. Choi et al. (2012) reported that call center agents who received supervisor support resulted in a significant increase on adverse effect of depersonalization on turnover intentions. They suggested that call center agents that were experiencing depersonalization were also already experiencing cynicism towards their supervisor and may have viewed supervisor support as another job demand, which is resulted in higher turnover intentions. They also found that monetary rewards

significantly lowered turnover intentions through depersonalization (cynicism) but led to significantly higher turnover intentions through reduced personal accomplishment (professional efficacy). Another study involving nurses found that low supervisor support resulted in higher levels of turnover intentions, depersonalization, and exhaustion (Kalliath & Beck, 2001). They also found that low supervisor support mediated the relationship between exhaustion and depersonalization and turnover intentions. Overbey (2013) examined telecommuters in a variety of positions at a computer systems integration firm and a veterinarian products distributor and found a significant relationship between perceived leadership styles and turnover intention. They found that the more a telecommuter perceived transformational leadership style the higher their turnover intent. In comparison, the more telecommuters perceived laissez-faire leadership style, the lesser their turnover intent and there was no significant relationship between perceived transactional leadership and turnover intent. They suggested transformational leadership was less preferable to laissez-faire leadership style and that telecommuters preferred less oversight and interaction with their supervisors than nontelecommuters. These studies show that job factors such as perceived leadership style, supervisor support and monetary rewards may impact the relationship between job burnout and turnover intentions, and the resulting relationship with telecommuting.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation in this study was that I could not calculate response rate because of changes in Facebook group membership due to members joining and leaving the groups daily. Another limitation in this study was that I did not collect data on age and gender.

Prior research has shown that different genders and age groups may experience different levels of burnout (see Amigo et al., 2014; Sims, 2007). It is possible that gender and age could have impacted the results of this study.

Another limitation was that data on industry and call type was not collected in this study. Data was collected via Facebook groups with call center agents in different industries that may have handled a variety of call types resulting in different stress levels. Prior research has shown that the level of the relationship between job stressors and turnover intention may differ between industries (Ming Benjamin Siong et al., 2006; Sims, 2007). Thus, these factors may have also influenced the data on burnout and turnover intentions in this study.

There are also job factors that can mediate the relationship between job burnout and turnover intentions and the resulting relationship with telecommuting that were not assessed in this study. For example, supervisor support and monetary rewards have been shown to mediate the relationship with job burnout and turnover intentions (Choi et al., 2012; Kalliath & Beck, 2001). Participants in the current study worked for a variety of companies that may have provided different levels of supervisor support and monetary rewards, which may have impacted the level of job burnout and turnover intentions.

Recommendations

Prior research has shown that the extent of the relationship between job burnout and turnover may vary between inbound and outbound call center agents (Rod & Ashill, 2013). Rod and Ashill (2013) found that there was a stronger negative relationship between call center stressors, and depersonalization (cynicism) and reduced personal

accomplishment (professional efficacy) for inbound representatives compared to outbound representatives. Thus, future research should compare the relationship between the individual components of job burnout, turnover intentions and telecommuting between inbound and outbound call center agents. In addition, a longitudinal study comparing inbound and outbound call center agents would provide an understanding of the cumulative effects of job burnout and turnover intentions among non-telecommuting and telecommuting call center agents.

Previous research has also suggested that there is relationship between perceived leadership styles, mentoring and turnover intentions among telecommuters (Overbey, 2013; Woo et al., 2019). While there was not significant relationship for perceived transactional leadership, Overbey (2013) found that there was a significant relationship between perceived leadership style and turnover intention among telecommuters. Woo et al. (2019) found that burnout predicted high turnover intentions, and that mentoring moderated the relationship between burnout and turnover intention. Future research should investigate the mediating role of perceived leadership style on the relationship between job burnout, turnover intentions among non-telecommuting and telecommuting call center agents. Further research should investigate this relationship utilizing different instruments to measure various components of job burnout. Researchers have also found that there is a relationship between supervisory support and turnover intentions (Choi et al., 2012; Fukui et al., 2019; Kalliath & Beck, 2001). Future research should investigate whether supervisor support mediates the relationship between job burnout and turnover intentions among telecommuting call center agents in a variety of industries.

Implications

The recent Covid-19 health crisis has led to an increase in telecommuting opportunities (Belzunegui-Eraso & Erro-Garcés, 2020). It has highlighted the need for organizations to seriously consider offering telecommuting options for the continued success of their businesses and to minimize the spread of illness among workers. Discovering ways that telecommuting can benefit workers have implications for positive social change for both organizations and employees. Organizations offering call center agents the opportunity to telecommute can lead to a reduction in organizational expenses through the need of less physical office space (Hillmer et al., 2004; Reynolds, 2010; Tuten & Neidermeyer, 2004). Offering telecommuting options can lead to a larger pool of qualified employees because the limitation of geographic location is removed (Reynolds, 2010). In the event of an epidemic, pandemic or natural disaster, organizations with at least a back-up plan that incorporates telecommuting can minimize not only their own financial expense, but possibly minimize loss of income to employees that can work remotely. These results contribute to positive social change by being able to be used as a tool in helping to reduce cynicism and exhaustion among nontelecommuters. An increase in telecommuting opportunities can also benefit employees with physical limitations and transportation issues by removing the need to leave their home each workday. This research contributes to the body of knowledge of what is known about call center agents, telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intentions. It filled a gap in the literature by determining if telecommuting is associated with job burnout and turnover intentions among call center agents.

Conclusion

This research study found that there was a statistically significant difference in exhaustion and cynicism between telecommuters and nontelecommuters. There was not a statistically significant difference in professional efficacy and turnover intentions between telecommuters and nontelecommuters. Further research is needed to determine whether other variables may have an impact on the relationship between telecommuting, job burnout, and turnover intentions among call center agents. Additionally, more research is needed for specific industries that utilize call center agents and for the various types of calls that agents handle. The occurrence of health crises and natural disasters increases the importance of organizations offering options to telecommute or be able to at least quickly transition to remote working. While there is no definitive solution to eliminating burnout, research should continue to attempt to identify factors that by themselves and/or in combination with others can help reduce job burnout across all job sectors.

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Appendix A: Box Plots and Mahalanobis Distance

Figure 1A

Box Plot of All Scalres

Box Plot of All Scales
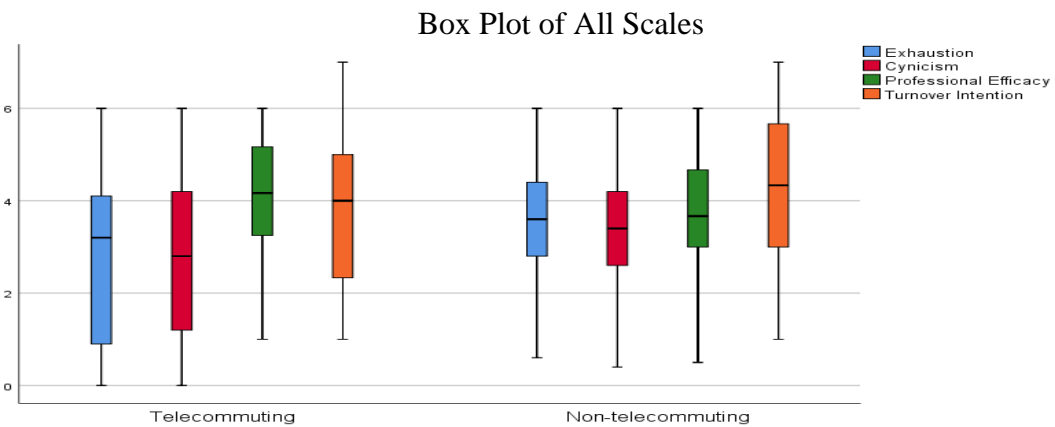
Figure 2B

Mahalanobis Distace

Mahalanobis Distance

Residuals Statistics

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	1.13E+10	1.14E+10	1.13E+10	5223819.833	152
Std. Predicted Value	-2.207	3.191	.000	1.000	152
Standard Error of Predicted Value	4273735.500	17594074.00	8529320.061	2612542.794	152
Adjusted Predicted Value	1.13E+10	1.14E+10	1.13E+10	5410505.107	152
Residual	-68872456.0	131499840.0	.000	48514534.34	152
Std. Residual	-1.401	2.674	.000	.987	152
Stud. Residual	-1.469	2.737	.001	1.005	152
Deleted Residual	-75704224.0	137711824.0	88455.400	50330024.93	152
Stud. Deleted Residual	-1.474	2.800	.004	1.011	152
Mahal. Distance	.147	18.340	3.974	3.160	152
Cook's Distance	.000	.080	.008	.014	152
Centered Leverage Value	.001	.121	.026	.021	152