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The Effect of Call Center Agent Burnout on Employee Engagement

Shyriah M. Marshall
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Shyriah M. Marshall

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Review Committee

Dr. James Herndon, Committee Chairperson, Industrial/Organizational Psychology
Faculty

Dr. Edoardo Naggiar, Committee Member, Industrial/Organizational Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2024

Abstract

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by

Shyriah M. Marshall

MA, Peru State College, 2015

BS, Peru State College, 2012

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Industrial and Organizational Psychology

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Abstract

Call center organizations have become important contact centers for various fields to conduct customer service. Within the automotive industry, call centers are used for emergency roadside assistance. The customer service representatives who are responsible for handling roadside assistance may be managing various issues, including burnout, which may carry over into their performance and ability to properly service customers. The relationships between burnout and employee engagement for inbound emergency roadside assistance agents were not well understood. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between customer service representatives' level of burnout and employee engagement. A quantitative, cross-sectional research design was used with a sample size of at least 394 participants who worked in inbound call centers that provided emergency roadside assistance using Survey Monkey participant pool. The data were analyzed in SPSS to analyze the relationship between burnout and employee engagement for call center representatives measured by instruments including the Regulatory Focus, Work Engagement, and Job Burnout Model, The Maslach Burnout Inventory – General Survey, and the 2020 US Census. Key findings include that there is correlation between engagement and burnout as well as burnout and demographics. The research may promote positive social change by providing call center leadership and advocates with research and suggestions they can potentially use to reduce burnout within call centers.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Call center organizations have been known as large places of employment, in terms of the ability to host large numbers of employees that can complete various jobs for their organizations. They have been widely known as first jobs for many as the amount of experience required is minimal compared to other organizations. For the proposed research, call centers that employ representatives that provide emergency roadside assistance will make up the research population. The proposed research will study the relationship between employee burnout and employee engagement.

Call centers began in the early 1990s according to Zito et al. (2018) as an attempt to create more resources for organizations. While much of the research pertaining to call centers has highlighted negative impacts, call centers have had positive impacts for the organization such as allowing customers to get resolutions at a lower cost for the organizations (Hudson et al., 2017). In addition to having positive impacts for organizations, call centers have been known to have negative impacts on employees. Call centers have been used to reduce costs and increase production; however, this may come at the expense of risking poor performance for representatives leading to negative customer experiences (Hudson et al., 2017). According to Rod and Ashill (2013) the characteristics of burnout include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. The definition of burnout in the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) includes depersonalization, decrease of efficacy, and emotional exhaustion, burnout rate amongst customer service representatives is high and can lead to higher absenteeism, low morale, and lower organizational commitment (Gorgens-Ekermans &

Kotze, 2020). The proposed research will not only seek to determine the relationship between burnout and employee engagement, but also to provide research specific to emergency roadside assistance.

Call centers that provide emergency roadside assistance have various impacts on society including traffic congestion, the safety of drivers, and the level of service that is provided to those that are in need. Roadside assistance employees can be of influence by aiding in providing timely service to members and giving proper instructions for roadside assistance. Throughout this chapter various topics will be discussed, including the background of call centers and burnout, the nature of the study, and the overall design of the proposed research.

Background

Call center organizations have constantly grown for years, not only in the United States, but all over the world including the number of employees and the types of roles that can be filled. In many cases, call centers are often hiring and offering new positions with strong growth opportunities, specifically internal promotion. Research from Bristow et al. (2000) indicates that with the advances in technology and computer operated dialing systems there are many opportunities for growth within call centers, allowing for faster dialing and an expansion of jobs that each employee can handle more quickly. Call centers are often known for high turnover rates due to factors that negatively impact work conditions, such as burnout. Call centers experience high turnover due to stress, nature of work, and employees being easily burned out due to work demands (Ro & Lee, 2017). Within call center organizations, generally, involuntary turnover is driven by attendance

and job performance. The high work demand and burnout within call center organizations are factors that may cause poor performance and/or poor attendance.

Previous research related to job stressors for inbound and outbound call center agents revealed a few areas of burnout for call center employees include role stressors, specifically role overload (Rod & Ashill, 2013). Rod and Ashill discovered the impact of burnout varied based on the role within the call center – specifically inbound or outbound agents due to different demands and resources provided for each role; yet burnout was still detected in each role. Previous research has demonstrated a relationship between stress and burnout. As an example, Mellor et al. (2015) found that organizational stress was related to burnout within a call center organization between 10% and 53% of the time. Additionally, their research indicates that agents who separate themselves from customers and co-workers also reduce their perception of their ability to complete their jobs. Lin and Lin (2017) conducted research that shows that rapport between customers and representatives has been suggested as a determinant of customer service management. One of the issues of job burnout, detachment, can have a huge impact on how the call center representative interacts with the members as distancing oneself from clients/customers is a form of protection from emotional arousal, thus impacting the service encounter (Maslach, 1998). Georgens-Ekermans et al. (2020) found that there was a difference between burnout based on occupation and that customer representatives that in roles where higher emotional labor is required there are more reports of negative emotions. Research reported by Rod and Ashill (2013) presents the opportunity for more

research that relates to how to generalize their findings as well as to focus on the different roles (inbound and outbound) and their impact on job stressors and burnout.

Some factors that can contribute to burnout are customer service representatives being generally underpaid, undertrained, and abused by customers (Sonderland, 2017). Sonderland explored burnout and customer satisfaction in face-to-face customer service – specifically a shoe store. Burnout has various impacts on customer service representatives and workers in general including anxiety, depression, distress, decreased self-esteem, fatigue and insomnia. In addition to health issues, burnout has been linked to deterioration of social and family relationships and dysfunctional outcomes in the individual's relation to the employer (Sonderland, 2017).

According to Sonderland (2017), service encounters are emotion driven and emotion related variables impact the customer's evaluation of service. In addition to emotional attachment, customer service representatives that are suffering from burnout tend to share with others, including customers. Emotional dissonance, the difference in emotions felt and what should be expressed (Zito et al., 2016) such as empathy or positivity, has continuously been an issue within call centers (Wegge et al., 2010). Sharing burnout effects is not limited to conversation as burnout can be carried out physically as well. Some indicators of burnout being expressed include transmission of clues like tone of voice, body language, and attitude (Sonderland, 2017). Sonderland argued when burnout was present customer satisfaction was lower when basing customer satisfaction on technical and functional dimensions – technical being the "what you get" and functional being "how you get it."

Maslach's multidimensional theory of burnout also highlights the impact of job mismatch on burnout. Within call center organizations, most employees start off at entry level roles. Some areas of burnout can stem from work overload, lack of control, insufficient reward, breakdown of community, and absence of fairness (Maslach, 1998). When there is a disconnection between the employee's preference and what is expected of the role, employees are more likely to experience burnout (Artha & Hidayat, 2018). Artha and Hidayat (2018) also argued that job mismatch also considers that some rewards programs are not sufficient to what employees believe that they are worth. Burnout impacts many areas, especially as it relates to health: 60% of doctors' visits stem from stress related to work problems and 40% of all employees feel overworked, pressured, and squeezed to the point of anxiety (Sonderland, 2017).

In emergency road service, there are other concerns including the customer's safety as well as the safety of other drivers. Beginning in the early 1990s, vehicular accidents lead the cause of fatalities, landing in ninth place, and is projected to move to fifth place over the next 9 years (Khademi & Choupani, 2018). Roadside assistance can impact road congestion which tends to also impact emergency roadside assistance wait times for customers. All of these factors have the potential to impact the customers and their level of satisfaction with roadside service customer representatives.

To provide quality roadside customer service, there are specific skills that are required of the representatives. The Institute of the Motor Industry (n.d.) identified some skills that are required of customer service representatives to include telephone skills, how to deal with complaints effectively, problem solving skills, and an understanding of

new cars and technology within the automobiles. Additionally, their research evaluated the human resources (HR) practices within emergency roadside assistance including the training and development of customer service representatives. Through their research, Castanheira and Chambel (2010) suggested that the way that customer service representatives are managed is related to employees' perception of job demands which are related directly to burnout.

Gap in Knowledge

While there have been years of research conducted related to both call centers and burnout, there is a lack of research for the automotive industry in relation to call centers and burnout. Call center advocates are responsible for collecting pertinent data that has an impact on society including safety, traffic conditions, and arrival time for emergency assistance. Studies related to burnout and job performance have been done previously (see the literature review in Chapter 2). For the proposed research, the ideal sample will be participants who are currently working in inbound call centers that provide emergency roadside assistance such as towing, jump starts, and so forth. Previous research has shown that call centers have experienced burnout such as research conducted by Mellor et al. (2015) where researchers isolated job stressors and determined that lack of job opportunities increased burnout within call centers. The proposed research seeks to determine the relationship between burnout and employee engagement within the call center environment.

This type of research is needed for various reasons including to suggest changes for call centers in the automotive industry that may be experiencing burnout. The

proposed research may also help to evaluate performance that can address social roadside issues including traffic concerns such as accidents, roadblocks, and so forth by ensuring that minor errors do not impact service times for the members. In addition to these reasons, the proposed research addresses a unique sample group with the potential to open the doors for more research within burnout and call center organizations.

Problem Statement

For years, there has been research conducted on general business call centers, both inbound and outbound, most of which highlights negative impacts of working for call centers (Mukherjee & Maheshwari, 2014). The bulk of the research reported pertaining to call centers considers burnout and its negative impact on job satisfaction according to Mukherjee and Maheshwari (2014). Demerouti et al. (2001) argued that burnout exists in various occupations including human services and non-human service occupations listing some of the effects of burnout as job-related depression, anxiety, and psychosomatic complaints. Georgens-Ekermans and Kotze (2020) also supported that there is a distinct difference in burnout when occupation is considered. Within call center organizations some common job stressors include role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload (Rod & Ashill, 2013). Role stress is common within call centers. Gorgens-Ekermans and Kotze argued that surface acting, defined as “an emotional regulation strategy through which appearance and conduct are self-monitored in order to display contextually appropriate emotions” (p. 22) within call centers was a leading cause for emotional exhaustion, leading to burnout. Mellor et al. (2015) highlighted work related stress in call centers which includes fatigue, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions and

their relationship to burnout. Little et al. (2011) suggested that call center stress can be physical and can also result in mental instability as well as influence family life and career advancement.

Of the research reviewed, Ruyter et al. (2001) indicated that future researchers could consider various types of role stress antecedents. Much research called for applying burnout and stress related research to different occupations including Shoji et al. (2016). Rod and Ashill (2013) suggest that researchers should explore organizational job resources that may not have been used in previous research such as reward and recognition programs specific to call centers. In many organizations there is support for medical leave, bereavement, and personal leaves can generally be approved based on business needs. Within call centers, one of the important factors is their level of service which is generally managed by workforce managements group to ensure that personnel costs are fitting to provide the desired level of service to customers (Mattia et al., 2017).

Staffing within call centers has been known to have an impact on ability to service customers, Mattia et al. (2017) argued that overstaffing impacts costs and job satisfaction while understaffing lowers service levels. Therefore, if a leave of absence, or absence of any kind, will be more than the company can afford for their service level, they are not recommended. As workplaces continue to evolve, various organizations are attempting to add incentives that will promote healthy workplace practices including offering exercise classes, providing standing breaks, and encouraging staff to participate in these activities (Adlakha, 2019).

Research conducted by Abdullateef and Saleeh (2013) using over 400 participants from call centers indicated that both knowledge management and technology-based customer relationship management were influencers of quality performance within call centers. In an automotive support organization, the performance of employees can also impact society as a whole since oftentimes these calls are emergency related. Finding out the cause for lower performance and finding solutions could generate suggestions for changes to processes that would spark improvement. One way to positively influence employee performance is to create stronger autonomy by encouraging management to examine employee work-life balance, doing so will help to reduce the likely hood of experiencing burnout (Adil & Baig, 2018). Another part of the corporate policies often include attendance, which is extremely important in call centers, as it is essential to ensure that staffing is equipped to handle call volume. Attendance for agents is imperative because they provide support for members in dangerous situations and impact the length of time that members have to wait for a response to proceed with service.

There is a lack of research pertaining to how employee burnout impacts employee engagement, particularly in organizations that do not have the ability to provide solutions for burnout like additional paid time off or limiting mandatory overtime. Most of the research conducted explores the relationship between burnout and impact on the customer service representative within fields that were not related to emergency roadside assistance such as sales, medical workers, and so forth. The proposed research will evaluate the impact of burnout on inbound call center agents that provide customer support and the effect on employee engagement.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between call center agent burnout and employee engagement. Emergency roadside assistance has existed for many years and can impact everyday life by its influence of safety and road congestion. The proposed research seeks to determine the relationship between performance, burnout, and satisfaction to help create a better work environment with reduced burnout. Research has been conducted pertaining to burnout in various occupations including health care, sales, and teaching – this research will help to apply some of those same principles to emergency roadside assistance and aid in closing the gap of knowledge.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The research questions (RQs) and hypotheses for the study were as follows:

RQ1: Are demographics such as gender, race, tenure, and years of education a predictor of burnout in customer service representatives?

H_a1: Demographics are not a predictor of burnout in customer service representatives.

H₀1: Demographics are a predictor of burnout in customer service representatives.

RQ2: What is the relationship between employee burnout and employee engagement rated by the Regulatory Focus, Work Engagement, and Job Burnout--Model and the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS)?

H_a2: There is a relationship between employee burnout and the employee engagement of call center advocates providing inbound customer support.

*H*₀₂: There is no relationship between employee burnout and the employee engagement of call center representatives providing inbound customer support.

Theoretical Framework

The theory this research will be based on is the job demands-resource (JD-R) model (Demerouti et al., 2001). Schaufeli (2017) argued that the JD-R model can be used as a framework to help prevent burnout as well as increase work engagement. The JD-R model focuses on working conditions and their relationship to burnout. Demerouti et al. (2001) presented working conditions in two categories: job demand and job resources. This theory was selected because corporate policies help to set the standard for working conditions. This JD-R model focuses on the importance of organizations providing employees with the right resources to efficiently complete their responsibilities. Last, the research conducted will expand on employee engagement and burnout by applying it specifically to roadside assistance organizations. Using this theory will also help to understand whether corporate policies, as a working condition, results in some of the same characteristics as burnout.

The multi-dimensional theory of burnout will also be used within this research to compare how inbound customer service representatives who provide automotive support identify with the same characteristics of burnout – depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and reduced sense of personal accomplishment. This theory will be used to determine how burnout has impacted employees and members and will be applied to call center agents during this research. Using both the JD-R model and the multi-dimensional

theory of burnout is consistent with research conducted in the past as it pertains to burnout.

These theories were used to outline the RQs by detailing the different areas that burnout affects such as overall performance. Using the JD-R model will help to evaluate how the organization provides the correct tools to handle the inbound call taker positions. These theories are also consistent with MBI which will be used to survey participants. In addition, both the theory and model have been used to understand the relationship with burnout and job performance in previous studies, such as research conducted by Adil and Baig (2018) where these models were used to examine burnout within pharmaceutical organizations. Additional information for the theoretical framework of the proposed research can be found in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study will be quantitative. The purpose of using a quantitative method is to evaluate the effect that burnout has on employee engagement by conducting surveys. Using a quantitative approach will help to focus on the impact customer service representative burnout has on employee engagement. Using this approach will be consistent with the work of Demerouti et al. (2001). Using a quantitative approach will help to support conducting research using the survey method.

For the proposed research, the independent variables are burnout and demographics. The dependent variable will be employee engagement. The data will be collected via an online survey method from participants that are customer representatives in inbound call centers along with surveys from call center management. The data will be

analyzed using SPSS to determine if there is a relationship between burnout, demographics, and employee engagement.

Definitions

For this research, the following definitions will be used:

Burnout: “A psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity” (Maslach et al., 1986, p. 192).

Call center: “An office equipped to handle a large volume of telephone calls for an organization (such as retailer, bank, or marketing firm) especially for taking orders or for providing customer service” (Merriam-Webster, n.d., para. 1)

Emergency roadside assistance: Assistance give to members/customers at the roadside for various reasons including towing, lockouts, jump starts, and so forth.

Assumptions

With the proposed research, there are two major assumptions involved with the study. One is the assumption that participants will give honest responses to the questions in the survey. While this survey does not ask for any personal information that could be dangerous to the participants, there is no guarantee that they will be honest with their responses. To overcome any hesitation to be honest, plans to keep data confidential will be shared with participants. Secondly, the assumption is that burnout is being experienced by some of the participants, which can be shown based on survey results. Survey results will rely on the honesty of each of the participants. Assumptions that can be made about participants includes that they are inbound call takers within emergency roadside

assistance organizations. Overall, these assumptions are tied to the honesty of the participant responses. The reason that this assumption is necessary is because of the type of data collection method (surveys) that is being used for this research.

Scope and Delimitations

The research problem includes the lack of research as it pertains to call centers and burnout for the automotive industry. The proposed research aims to determine the impact that burnout has on employee engagement. In addition to call centers having minimal research about burnout, there is a specific lack as it pertains to emergency roadside assistance representatives. Another part of the research problem that this research addresses includes the social impacts that emergency roadside assistance has on others including traffic issues and the safety of the public. This also addresses the issues that the emergency roadside assistance representatives may be facing because of burnout.

The proposed research has various boundaries, specifically related to population. This research is limited to a specific group of participants, which excludes general population. Having a specific group as participants may also limit generalization for this study. The conceptual frameworks and theories that are used for burnout are often Maslach's theory of burnout - which is used for the proposed research. Another theory that will be used is the JD-R model, which was also used frequently in industry research.

Generalizability is limited for the proposed research for various reasons. The main reason for minimal generalizability is that this research has a small sample size. However, this research will add to literature and research that has already been

conducted. Generalizability within the automotive industry may be more attainable for this study as the population is directly related to the automotive field.

Limitations

The use of surveys as a method of data collection yields various limitations including findings being dependent on the reliability of measures that are being used. Although the MBI has proven reliability in the past, a limitation for this research could be the combination of the measures. Another limitation for this research is the population that has been selected may limit the ability to generalize the findings from this study. Last, a limitation to using surveys is the ability to find participants and verify that they are part of the target population.

Biases that could influence the outcome of the study include selection bias and biased due to work environment. To overcome these biases the nature of research will be revealed to participants prior to their completion of the survey. The identity of the researcher will only be provided to leadership of the organization to avoid additional biases. Also, selection bias will be overcome based on participation from the organization to ensure that participants fit within the sample population. Addressing these limitations will be done by communicating effectively with the participants and call center management and using tools including the consent form as well as other resources to communicate with all participants.

Significance

This study will provide originality by the topic and the approach of the research. Examining burnout and job performance will support professional practice by helping to

provide research for leaders/organizations upon which to base their leadership styles. Also, this research could be used to help revamp corporate policies within call centers. Last, this research may bring about positive social change by helping call center advocates to improve their experience by acknowledging the impact of burnout on performance and employee engagement.

Since this research is specific to call center representatives that provide automotive support, another area of significance is the customers that are affected by the employee performance. For example, if a customer service representative inputs the wrong information in their calls there can be an impact on the customers, such as prolonged wait times, missed service opportunities, and so forth. Most of the customers needing roadside assistance are in dangerous situations such as accident scenes, blocking traffic, or are in neighborhoods in which they do not feel safe. Much of the research conducted pertaining to call centers focused on the agents and their performance, but had little information concerning how the members/customers could be impacted. Ro and Lee (2017) indicated that employee burnout has a direct effect on turnover, thus impacting the amount of work required from other employees. As a result of absenteeism and turnover, service level is directly impacted indicating that organizations are not able to provide customers with service in a timely manner. This portion of the research has the potential to create social change by finding ways to decrease the number of errors made by advocates that may be suffering from burnout, which will allow for members to have a better experience with roadside services. This research could also bring awareness to the multiple areas in which burnout is having a negative impact on employee engagement.

Summary

Overall, the proposed research seeks to address the relationship between burnout, demographics, and employee engagement. This chapter has previewed many sections of the proposed research including the problem statement, RQs, hypotheses, and the significance of this study. To ensure that the proposed research will add to current scholarship, a literature review was conducted and can be presented in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Within call centers, most impacts of burnout have had a negative influence on overall performance. Mukherjee and Bhal (2017) highlighted that call center research related to burnout highlighted negative impacts, however, they argued that not all burnout has a negative impact, specifically on employee self-worth. Burnout is not unique to call centers, however, call centers have their own unique types of role stress. Call center advocates also face multidirectional role stress. Communication is an essential part of successfully functioning within call centers, without having the proper communication on acceptable behaviors, customer service representatives tend to experience role ambiguity, the employee's perception of a lack of clear information they need to perform their roles (Sahadev, Purani, & Panda, 2017). In addition, role ambiguity, call center employees are often expected to include both emotional and intellectual efforts thus bringing on more role stress (Isjik & Hamurcu, 2017).

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between employee burnout and engagement. The results from this research could help organizations to increase employee performance and reduce employee burnout. Also, this research will review how society is impacted by the lack of support from call centers, specifically related to automotive support and emergency roadside assistance. Throughout this chapter various topics will be covered including past and present research related to call centers, job burnout, and employee engagement. Details pertinent to the strategy, literature, and theoretical framework will be provided throughout this chapter.

Literature Search Strategy

To obtain sources for this research, I searched databases accessible from Walden University Library, such as EBSCO, as well as the search engines Google Scholar and Google Search. The following keywords were used to find relevant data for the research: *call center, customer service, burnout, Maslach's theory of burnout, employee engagement, customer service, inbound call center, outbound call center, service level, automotive support, automotive, tow truck(s), and job demands-resources model.* Boolean operators “and” and “or” were used to narrow the amount of data reviewed via the databases and search engines. To limit the search to the most recent research, I specified publication dates of 2017 to 2021. I reviewed older publications to learn more about the theory used for this study.

Theoretical Foundation

There are various theories related to burnout and its impact on job satisfaction. The theory used for this research is the JD-R model (Demerouti et al., 2001). The JD-R model originated as the job demands and job resources model; however, the most recent framework was used for this research. Baker and Demerouti (2007) argued that job demands predict job strain and the resources given by employers predict employee motivation. The JD-R model defines working conditions in two categories – job demand and job resources, indicating that organizations must provide the proper resources to allow employees to effectively complete their role. The use of this theory was based on the need to determine the impact of corporate policies and their support, or lack thereof, of call center representatives.

Various researchers have used the JD-R model to conduct research within call centers. Zito et al. (2018) used the JD-R model to explore turnover intentions within a call centers. Zito et al. also explore some characteristics of burnout, specifically emotional dissonance, to determine their impact on job satisfaction. They argued that emotional dissonance had both a negative and positive relation to job satisfaction and that job resources have a positive relationship with job satisfaction, and sometimes a negative relationship with job satisfaction. Zito et al. used both characteristics of burnout as well as the JD-R model to further understand each impact on customer service representatives.

Molino et al. (2016) examined emotional dissonance for inbound call center agents. The researchers used the JD-R model to determine the impact job demands (workload and customer verbal aggression) and resources (supervisor and colleague support and job autonomy). Using the JD-R model allowed the researchers to gain more clarity on how the demands and resources impact job stressors that are related to emotional dissonance.

The JD-R model along with the theory of burnout was used by Consiglio et al. (2013) added to this research, arguing that the JD-R model and burnout influence job absenteeism at the team and individual level. Consiglio et al. (2013) defines self-efficacy as the belief in one's ability to master specific domains in order to produce attainments. Self-efficacy is one of the characteristics that are part of burnout according to Maslach's theory of burnout. The JD-R model is used frequently as it pertains to call center literature. Burnout also is examined quite often during call center research. The previous

examples have shown that the use of the JD-R model and burnout can be used to conduct research in the call center field.

Research Gap

Overall, there is a lack of research related to employee burnout and its impacts on employee engagement, within automotive services. The bulk of the research completed for job burnout explores the relationship between burnout and job satisfaction but does not research the impacts that job burnout can have on employee engagement for emergency roadside assistance representatives. Also, some job burnout research does not explore the field of customer service especially from the call center perspective. The proposed research will evaluate the impact of burnout on call center representatives and explore how burnout impacts the level of service provided and how satisfied (or unsatisfied) customers are with their performance. Emergency roadside assistance representatives can impact customer safety and their removal from the roadside. By providing a safe experience for their customers, there is an impact on society including providing a safe road environment with less traffic and the potential to impact customer and worker injuries. While research has been conducted concerning burnout and job performance, this research will take a different approach by viewing burnout in the automotive industry and the demographic differences that may impact burnout and performance.

Literature Review

Brief History of Call Centers

Call centers within the United States as well as other countries have been used as a source of providing customer service for many years. Call centers began to surface in the early 1990s as a resource to save money for various organizations (Zito et al., 2018). A benefit often gained from call centers includes 24-hr customer service capability (Wienclaw, 2013). Call centers can be used for various reasons including getting assistance with a product (Wienclaw, 2013) or for use of a service, such as emergency roadside assistance. Choi et al. (2012) found that call centers can be effective in terms of gaining new customers, retaining existing relationships, and increasing customer loyalty.

Call centers have grown over the years and are therefore more than just a contact center. In addition to allowing for 24-hr customer service, call centers also give more opportunities for organizations to communicate with their consumers. Customers can now contact customer service representatives through email, phone, fax, and in some cases instant messages (chat) according to Ahghari and Balcioğlu (2008). When organizations have various streams of customer service, they can use skilled-based routing (SBR). Using SBR allows for agents to be skilled and/or assigned various calls that require more than one skill. In emergency roadside assistance, there are various roles including agents that have direct contact with customers and those that handle dispatching – the assigning of calls to facilities. SBR allows for the phone system to route the calls to the proper agent. One of the greatest benefits of SBR is that it allows for organizations to minimize customer hold time. Ahghari and Balcioğlu pointed out the

challenges of using SBR which include having appropriate staffing, efficient resource pooling, skill assignment, and having to determine the correct number of agents to multi-skill and effectively routing calls.

Call center agents are expected to effectively communicate with various customers throughout their workday. Dealing with unfriendly customers can attribute to job burnout and negatively impact employee attitude (Choi et al., 2012). Some skills required to be successful within call centers include communication, being skilled in technology, and the ability to not allow outside emotions and/or issues impact interactions with customers (emotional labor) (Rod & Ashill, 2013). The interaction between call center agents can be very daunting, so much so that interactions with upset customers, specifically in offshore call centers, has been a cause for high turnover. Call center turnover is between 30% and 45% on average, according to the Quality Assurance and Training Connection, which details that turnover is organization specific and is steadily increasing (Reynolds, 2015). When dealing with turnover in call centers, one of the biggest issues is that a loss of skilled employees can deteriorate service quality (Choi et al., 2012) as it is not easy to simply replace qualified and skilled customer service representatives.

Burnout in Call Centers

Rod and Ashill (2013) identified emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment as characteristics of burnout. When working with call center representatives that handle emergency roadside assistance calls, they are faced with various stressors and demands from both customers as well as the demands enforced

by call center leadership. Call centers experience high turnover for various reasons, including stress, employee burnout and nature of work (Ro and Lee, 2017). The performance of customer service representatives is also influenced by call center leadership. Within call center environments, representatives generally have direct access to leadership to assist with immediate issues and can obtain operational direction (Ibrahim, Susan, and Karatepe, 2018). In call centers where more job resources are provided to assist with emotional exhaustion, call center representatives tend to feel more supported, thus providing call centers with improved performance (Ibrahim et al., 2018).

According to Sonderland (2017), other factors that contribute to burnout include being underpaid, under trained, and abused by customers. Sonderland also argued that service encounters are emotional and can also impact the customer's evaluation of the service that they have received. Sonderland also indicated that customer service representatives that experience burnout also tend to share burnout with others including their peers and customers that they interact with. In 1998, Maslach indicated that another cause of burnout can be job mismatch, which can exist within call centers as well later arguing that stressors such as job mismatch impacts the level of burnout experienced and affects personal outcomes, such as work behavior and performance (Maslach, 2017). Often, call center representatives are trained for numerous roles and are expected to perform those roles simultaneously. Call centers often use SBR to route their calls to the correct representative (Ahghari & Balcioglu, 2008). If customer representatives are overwhelmed or underpaid, they are at risk of experiencing burnout. Maslach (1998) argued that burnout can stem from work overload, lack of control, breakdown of

community, insufficient rewards, and absence of fairness. Over the years, this theory has been used in various studies to further develop the theory and apply it to more recent times. In addition to its effects on performance, burnout has also been known to impact employees physically as well. Sonderland (2017) indicated that 40% of workers feel overworked, pressured, and squeezed to the point of anxiety.

In previous research, various tools have been used to collect data related to burnout, customer satisfaction, and call centers. For example, Narayanan and Moynihan (2006) used a mixed methods approach which included both surveys as well as site visits. The proposed research has benefited from the previous works as they have laid the foundation for how burnout impacts call center representatives. In past works, researchers have observed representatives in their workplace and have gone as far as to create workplace situations and observe behavior. While conducting research, the past research has been beneficial as it has provided examples of different data collection methods and analyzing methods as it relates to the JD-R model as well as the Burnout Inventory Survey (Narayanan et al., 2006).

According to Maslach's burnout theory, there are three components to burnout which include emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Maslach, 1998). This theory has been supported through various studies in different fields including academia (Vukmirovic, Rajovic, Pavlovic, Masic, Mirkovic, Tasic, Randjelovic, Mostic, Velickovic, Nestorovic, Milcanovic, Stanisavljevic, and Milic, 2020) and emotional workers that work in call centers (Lee, Lee, Kim, Shin, Yoon, and Kim, 2019). Choi et al. (2012), in a survey of over 200 call center representatives,

found that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment increased turnover intentions. Of the three, emotional exhaustion also attributed to increased depersonalization. Part of the emotional exhaustion that exists within call centers also increases the need for emotional labor from customer service representatives.

Emotional Labor

Working within a call center requires emotional labor, where it is required for them to display emotions that are not a reflection of their true emotions (Ibrahim et al., 2018) from agents which can be a leading source of burnout. Research conducted by Rod and Ashill (2013) indicated that outbound agents were more likely to depersonalize more than inbound agents because they focus more on selling than problem solving, which proved to have different coping methods. Emotional labor can have negative impacts on call center agents' well-being due to the amount of suppressed negative emotions (Zito et al., 2018).

Emotional labor is not only required from the call center agents but is also required from customers as well. According to Molino et al. (2016) emotional labor is described as the result of some triggers of negative customer emotions including long hold times, interactions with tired or impatient employees, and the ability to get their problems solved (Hudson et al., 2017). Other causes for negative emotions from customers include when the interactions leave customers feeling uncertain, dehumanized, or when they feel they are treated as if they are incompetent or in a hostile manner (Hudson et al., 2017). Other factors that contribute to negative emotions from customers

include if their goals are not being met, if they are unsure about the process or outcome, and they cannot control the outcome according to Hudson et al. (2017).

Engagement and Exhaustion

Burnout exists in various forms and is not restricted to one area of work. Both engagement and job-person mismatches are known to be causes of burnout (Maslach, 1998). Newer dimensions of Maslach's (1998) burnout theory have shown that engagement includes the levels of energy, involvement, and efficacy that go into everyday work. Research conducted by Montalbo and Agong (2017) indicates that newer employees are more likely to be engaged than more tenured employees. Job mismatches are also impacted by burnout. Maslach and Leiter (2016) argued that the bigger the job matching gap, the more opportunity there is for burnout. Job mismatching can be a driving force in job burnout and can also impact multiple areas of work. There are approximately six areas where job mismatches can occur and burnout can be present which include work overload, lack of control, insufficient reward, breakdown of community, absence of fairness, and value conflict (Maslach et al., 2016).

Of these dimensions one of the most common results of burnout is exhaustion. Exhaustion is the mostly widely researched dimension of burnout. As it relates to call centers, one of the major stressors is emotional exhaustion. Reb et al. (2017) found that exhaustion led to more turnover intentions, particularly when there is a lack of mindfulness behaviors. Reb et al. used the MBI to determine levels of burnout within participants. Their findings suggest that to combat emotional exhaustion, organizations could use mindfulness techniques to help reduce burnout and turnover intentions.

Call Center Expectations

Many organizations use call centers to handle the day to day needs of their customers. Call centers are expected to maintain a particular level of service to satisfy their customers. Service levels impact a call center's ability to provide services. There are various things that can impact service level, such as absences and late arrivals. Leon and Morales (2018) argued that call center absenteeism can be influenced by call center leadership and their leadership styles. Through their research they determined that leaders with more people-oriented leadership styles experienced higher performance and less absenteeism. Ro and Lee (2017) argued that employee burnout has a direct effect on turnover and absenteeism which highlights the importance of adjusting HR and call center policies to accommodate employees.

Emergency Roadside Assistance

For the proposed research, the definition of emergency roadside assistance will equate to tow trucks and service vehicles sent to assist with breakdowns including accidents, disabled vehicles, and so forth. Call center representatives who work in emergency roadside service are charged with various responsibilities including gather the location of those needing assistance, relaying information to service providers, and in some instances troubleshoot vehicles. One way that call centers have been successful in completing roadside assistance is through the use of various technology. In the past, call centers have used a public switched telephone network, general telephones like house phones, and intelligence network, more up-to-date technology that allows for multiple use and various lines, to collect data from customers including pinpointing their location

(Khayltash and Hanrahan, n.d.). In terms of technology, there is extreme importance of full functionality of all systems, since being without service can be detrimental.

In addition to call center technology, another form of technology often used is global positioning system, to determine both the location of disabled vehicles and the service vehicles. The use of technology often requires various skills to be able to successfully complete calls. A customer service representative's ability to operate the technology and complete calls has a direct impact on the service level of the organization, therefore, impacting the overall brand (Yerpude and Singhal, 2017). These researchers also agreed that technology is an important role in emergency roadside assistance as a means of collecting and analyzing data.

One of the more common reasons for calling roadside assistance include vehicle accidents. Since the beginning of the automotive industry, accidents have been a concern for drivers and nearby citizens. The first automobile accident, involving a combustible engine, dates back to 1891, and accidents have since been a concern for citizens (Goniewicz, Goniewicz, Pawlowski, & Fiedor, 2015). Since the beginning of the automotive industry, emergency roadside assistance has been needed along with road rules to aid in lowering the number of accidents. As technology increases, the automotive industry is faced with new challenges to assist those impacted by automobiles, which essentially includes all citizens whether it is drivers, passengers, or pedestrians. Road accidents continue to be one of the highest causes of death. In 2015, Goniewicz et al. argued there was a car crash nearly every 50 s, with injuries including death or long-term injuries that are very costly to those involved. In addition to these findings, as speed

limits are increased and vehicles become more advanced, the number of deaths by car accidents is expected to rise (Goniewicz et al., 2015).

When discussing emergency road service and accidents, one side to consider is the emotional state the members are in at the time of contact. The difference between regular communication and emergency roadside assistance is that there are often times where probing and attention to detail are required. Svensson and Hallgren (2018) argued that telephone use reduces sensory communication to hearing only. As a result, emergency call takers are required to use various cues that they can hear to assess emergencies and safety of the members. Although it is difficult to assess emergencies via phone, Svensson and Hallgren found that emergency call takers were generally able to prioritize their emergencies within the first 30 s of a call.

Overall, emergency roadside assistance call takers are charged with many tasks including determining emergencies, properly documenting information, and communicating with emergency vehicles. Roadside assistance has been a necessity for many years, and with the growth in vehicles and their technology, will continue to be used worldwide. Burnout within call centers can often be attached to emotional labor, which is required in this role. Assessing emergencies and being able to effectively communicate with members is essential for this role.

Burnout

When studying burnout, specifically within call centers, a common topic included mindfulness and its relationship to burnout. One of the components of the Maslach's theory of burnout is exhaustion. To assist with preventing burnout, many suggest finding

ways to reduce exhaustion, starting with mindfulness. Guidetti, Viotti, Badagliacca, Colombo, and Converso (2019) argued that mindfulness has a negative impact on burnout therefore reducing negative appraisals of stress. Mindfulness has had both positive and negative influences on burnout in the past. Narayanan and Moynihan (2006) argued that comparing mindfulness to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, mindfulness has a negative influence while having a positive influence on personal accomplishment, another component of burnout. Another aspect to consider when viewing the relationship between burnout and mindfulness is the relationships that organizations have with mindfulness. To support mindfulness, it is critical that customer service representatives feel that they can be expressive without judgement (Guidetti et al., 2019).

When viewing burnout in relation to call centers, it is important to understand various aspects that are unique to call centers as well as customer service industries. Burnout has also been known to have an impact on customer satisfaction as well as the employee performance, Wu and Shie (2017) used the conservation of resources theory to gain an understanding how emotional labor impacts the relationship between customer orientation and job burnout. They argued that customer orientation is negatively associated with burnout. Wegge et al. (2007) viewed job stressors from the approach of how customers influence job stress on call center representatives. They argued that unfriendly customers provoke intense emotions and more job strain, while friendly customers provoke the opposite. This approach provides an understanding of how emotional labor is impacted by the actions of customers. Customer attitude not only has

an influence on burnout, but also impacts how customer service representatives interact with other customers as well as their peers within their organizations (Kim & Qu, 2019).

Another approach to burnout within call centers was taken through the research of Visser and Rothmann (2008) as they explored antecedents and consequences of burnout. Some characteristics used to evaluate burnout within the call center included competing management goals, work overload, electronic performance monitoring, lack of career opportunities, lack of skill variety, and emotional labor. The researchers argued that the previously mentioned characteristics predict burnout. In addition to that hypothesis, they also argued that burnout predicts low affective commitment, turnover intention, and that organizational commitment regulates the relationship between burnout and turnover intentions.

Visser and Rothmann (2008) identified six characteristics specific to call center burnout – competing management goals, work overload, electronic performance monitoring, lack of career opportunities, lack of skill variety, and emotional labor. Through their research Visser and Rothmann (2008) determined that burnout was positively related to the lack of career opportunities. Burnout had a “medium” relationship with the other characteristics. There was a clear indication that there is a positive relationship between burnout and turnover intentions which is consistent with past research. In addition to burnout’s impact on the call center, research shows that burnout can have an impact on personal life. Hlubocky, Taylor, Marron, Spence, McGinnis, Brown, McFarland, Tetzlaff, Gallagher, Rosenberg, Popp, Dragnev, Bosserman, Dudzinski, Smith, Chatwal, Patel, Markham, Levit, Bruera, Epstein, Brown,

Back, Shanafelt, and Kamal (2020) argued that burnout, when coming from work overload, has been shown to cause more work-home conflicts, making it difficult to separate work and home life. They also argued that another consequence of burnout is loss of revenue due to decrease in productivity.

Role Stress and Maslach's Theory of Burnout

Role stressors have also been known influence burnout. Ashill, Rod, Thirkell, and Carruthers (2009) evaluated the relationship between role stress and burnout. The difference with the research done by Ashill et al. is that they used job resourcefulness as a personal trait as it relates to burnout and its influence on overall performance. The researchers argued that there was a positive relationship between role stressors and call center front line employee emotional exhaustion, role stressors and depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

The results of their research indicated that there was a positive relationship between role stressors and call center front line employee emotional exhaustion. However, their research indicated that there was not a positive relationship between role stressors and call center employee depersonalization. These results were not consistent with Maslach's theory of burnout that was used a theoretical framework for this study. This research helped to expand on literature that had been presented in the past concerning call centers, burnout, and job performance.

Job stressors have been previously linked to burnout, specifically, within call centers. Call center agents are often expected to perform numerous roles during their jobs. These expectations have been known to create job stress and a feeling of being

overworked (Taddei and Contena, 2010). Doellgast and Obrady (2020) argued that high stress levels are present within call centers with as little as 4% to 6% employees reporting low stress levels. Higher stress levels within call centers also leads to increased absenteeism, turnover, and job satisfaction. Within call center environments various forms of performance management are used including digital performance management. Through their research, Dollegast et al. indicated that 30% of participants felt that call center performance management is used to help them improve, while 70% feel that this information is only used to discipline them. Performance management assists with burnout in terms of how customer service representatives' feelings of personal accomplishment.

Job Demands-Resource Model and Burnout

The JD-R model has been used throughout research due to its level of flexibility and its ability to be applied across various fields (Zito et al., 2018). According to Zito et al. (2018), this model views assumes that employee experience is influenced by two factors – job demands and job resources. Using this model implies that jobs should provide the proper resources for employees to be able to meet the demands of the work required. An example of this would be within call centers ensuring that employees are provided with equipment such as computers, telephones, headsets, and so forth to be able to properly complete the calls as needed. Zito et al. They argued that job resources have a positive relationship with job satisfaction. Choi et al. (2012), using the burnout theory, to argue that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment increase turnover intentions, which was strongly supported by data

results. They also argued that emotional exhaustion increased depersonalization. This research relates three of the characteristics of burnout identified by Maslach to call center representatives

Each study conducted related to burnout and the JD-R model suggested various steps to help with eliminating or reducing burnout. They suggested using HR to combat burnout such as monetary rewards and offering support with career pathing (Hidayat and Agustina, 2019). The researchers used a hypothesis that argued that autonomy and job demands mediate the relationship between HR systems and burnout. They also suggested that the combination of calls taken by call center representatives forces HR practices to be combined for them to be able to complete their roles successfully, such as reviewing role responsibilities, pay, and so forth. Castanheira and Chambel (2010) argued that HR practices have influence over burnout including the use of the JD-R model. Taking this approach helps to understand how the role that HR has in the relationship between burnout and job demands and resources. This research shows that HR support aides in making sure that advocates are provided with their needs to successfully complete their roles.

Generally, within call center organizations there are strategic goals that are set for the company. To reach these goals, there are steps that the call centers must follow, this aligns with the JD-R model. According to Erol, Gur, Ergun, and Yalcin (2014) some of these goals include shortening handle time, increasing quality of customer service experience, and decreasing overall expenses. Erol et al. (2014) aimed their RQs to

determine the level of burnout within call centers and the factors affecting call center burnout, specific to call centers that handle banking.

Erol et al. (2014) determined that within the call center there were multiple characteristics of burnout that was present amongst workers including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. They also determined that some of the employees that experienced burnout were also experiencing physical complications such as lack of sleep, headaches, nervousness, fatigue, and sore throat. It is recommended that to combat burnout within this call center to seek treatment immediately for those experiencing physical issues and to attempt to reduce work stressors.

Findings have been consistent amongst research related to burnout and the JD-R model. Researchers have found that various characteristics of burnout have a negative relationship with satisfaction. These concepts were selected for this research based on the fact that burnout within call centers is still an ongoing issue. Also, these concepts have not been applied to emergency roadside assistance agents. Using these methods will help to fill a void and create another avenue for call center research. There is room for future research as it relates to call centers in different professions/fields.

Summary and Conclusions

Various studies have shown the importance ensuring that representatives have all that they need to be able to successfully complete their role. Evidence supports that burnout has a negative impact on job satisfaction; however, what is unknown is how each profession is affected by burnout. In this research, I will examine how emergency

roadside assistance representatives are affected by job burnout using Maslach's theory of burnout and JD-R model.

This research will also bring a unique approach to the study of customer service representative burnout, with a special focus on those who provide roadside assistance. Previous researchers sought to gain an understanding of how burnout impacted job satisfaction. However, this research will examine the relationship between burnout, demographics, and employee engagement. This research will stay consistent with past research by using surveys to find data to either support or reject the hypothesis. Details on methodology and customer representative will be provided in Chapter 3 to follow.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The proposed research examined the relationship between burnout, demographics, and employee engagement among call center representatives who handle emergency roadside assistance calls (including sending tow trucks, service vehicles, and handling accident calls). Roadside assistance has had consistent impact on citizens since the creation of the first automobile and automobile accidents (Goniewicz, Goniewicz, Pawlowski, & Fiedor, 2015).

Burnout has also been a topic of research for many years. Maslach's theory of burnout (Maslach, 1998), as well as the JD-R model (Demerouti et al., 2001) were used to shape the RQs and hypotheses for the proposed research. Throughout this chapter, details will be provided on how the data for the proposed research will be collected. Details pertaining to the research design, rationale, methodology, and threats to validity will also be provided in this chapter.

Research Design and Rationale

Design

This research used a quantitative cross-sectional survey research design. This design is fitting for the proposed research as this research analyzed data collected from a sample population concerning particular variables, in this case burnout, demographics, and employee engagement. This study is correlational as it is geared to determining the relationship between burnout, demographics, and employee engagement without being able to control these variables. In addition to being a correlational design, ordinal logistic

regression will be used to analyze data. Using logistic regression will allow for the examination of the relationship between the predictor and outcome variables. Each of the instruments being used uses a Likert scale of measurement. A correlational design was selected based on the RQs examining the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

For the proposed research, the RQs are as follows:

RQ1: Are demographics such as gender, race, tenure, and years of education a predictor of burnout in customer service representatives?

H_{a1} : Demographics are not a predictor of burnout in customer service representatives.

H_{01} : Demographics are a predictor of burnout in customer service representatives.

RQ2: What is the relationship between employee burnout and employee engagement rated by the Regulatory Focus, Work Engagement, and Job Burnout Model and the MBI-GS?

H_{a2} : There is a relationship between employee burnout and the employee engagement of call center advocates providing inbound customer support.

H_{02} : There is no relationship between employee burnout and the employee engagement of call center representatives providing inbound customer support.

Constraints

While this design will help to determine the relationship between the variables, it will not indicate the cause for change in the variables (Dziark, 2019). Also, since the study is specific to emergency roadside assistance representatives, there is minimal room

for generalization of the proposed study. For the proposed research, the survey method was used to collect data. In terms of time constraints, there can be issues with response times and analyzing the data. It will be necessary to ensure that all data are referring to the same time frame to avoid inconsistency.

Consistency

This research design is consistent with research designs needed to advance knowledge in this discipline based on its use in past research. Of the research reviewed for the proposed research, most of the researchers used the survey method along with a correlational design. Along with using a correlational design, an ordinal logistic regression analysis was also used. Using this method allowed for expansion on current literature. Another way that this research design is consistent with those studies in the same discipline is that the survey method, specifically related to Maslach's theory of burnout, will be used. Overall, as it relates to burnout and call center representatives a correlational approach has been used in the past and numerous other studies have used the survey method as well. Continuing to use this method will show consistency within the discipline as well as expand on current research.

Variables

The predictor variable burnout was examined as a predictor of customer service representative performance. Demographics are other predictor variables as they relate to burnout and include gender, race, tenure, and years of education. The outcome variables are job performance and the satisfaction of customers who have received service from the emergency roadside assistance. Burnout will be evaluated using the MBI-GS (Schaufeli

et al., 1986). Burnout will be conceptually defined using the definition provided by Maslach et al. (1986): “a psychological syndrome of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment that can occur among individuals who work with other people in some capacity” (p. 192).

Methodology

Population

The population for the proposed study included inbound call center representatives who work in or support emergency roadside assistance. For the proposed research a sample size of at least 347 customer service representatives will be sufficient. This sample size was determined using G*Power. The following data was entered into G*Power to determine sample size – z test for logistic regression and a priori as type of power analysis. This will be a two tailed test with a power of 0.95 and critical z of 1.96. The following sample size is consistent with the literature used for the proposed study.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

Nonprobability sampling was used for the proposed research as it is best fit for the target group that will be used. The use of purposeful sampling method will help to address the gap in research pertaining to emergency roadside assistance call centers. Using these methods will help to ensure that the proper participants. These methods are consistent with past research and will help to provide the sample that is required for this research.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

To draw my sample, I used SurveyMonkey's participant pool. Prospective participants were asked to verify whether they met certain eligibility criteria. The sample frame included individuals who met the following requirements:

- work in organizations that provide emergency roadside assistance
- worked within the emergency roadside assistance department for more than 1 year
- work in inbound department of call center to relate to performance evaluations

Participants who worked in organizations that did not provide emergency roadside assistance or who worked in outbound or dispatching for emergency roadside assistance were ineligible for the study.

To recruit participants, I followed certain steps. Participants were purchased using SurveyMonkey participant pool. As part of this research, it was determined if the call centers are inbound or outbound to determine if participants are within the right target group to participate in the proposed research. Demographic information that will be collected to include age, years of experience, and education of the participants.

Collecting data from human participants requires that a researcher obtain informed consent before beginning their study. Before undertaking the study, I obtained Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to ensure that the research was acceptable according to university guidelines. Informed consent was obtained by providing prospective participants a letter and a form with details about the study and their potential participation. Written informed consent was obtained online using digital

signatures. The following items were included in the informed consent form: the purpose of the research, confidentiality measures, the length of time required to participate in the study, and the potential benefits of the research.

Data Collection

Data was collected for the proposed research using online questionnaires. The surveys were sent using SurveyMonkey participant pool. Doing so had the advantage of having a quick turnaround time, and minimal costs. This method required email addresses and web access from the participants to collect information. The results will be kept confidential and will be reported to the organizations upon their request. For this type of data collection, there was minimal procedures for exiting the study. Last, there will not be any follow-up, outside of data being provided to participants and organizational management for the call centers, procedures required for the proposed research.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

Instruments

The survey used for the proposed research is the MBI-GS (Schaufeli et al., 1986; see Appendix A). This instrument was developed and published between 1981 and 1986 and is currently published through Mind Garden. There are various versions of this instrument, the most fitting is the general version which has been used for customer service representatives in the past. The general version includes a 16-item survey with items on a seven-point Likert scale where participants will rate how often they feel the specific item from never to every day. Permission to distribute this survey has been granted from Mind Garden.

Reliability for the MBI has been consistent which has demonstrated through various studies that have been used this instrument. This measure is widely used and has had consistent results. The MBI-GS has also yielded acceptable levels of Cronbach's alpha for all three versions of the instrument. According to Maslach et al. (1986) the MBI has shown reliable using Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 for emotional exhaustion, 0.71 for personal accomplishment, and 0.79 for depersonalization. The MBI has been used for various populations including human services, educators, customer service workers, and so forth, which is why it is fitting for the proposed research as the call center representatives are also recognized as customer service workers. Originally this method was tested using participants including various health workers and teachers. This method is consistent with the proposed study as it aids in determining burnout using the same definition and theory as the proposed research.

Employee engagement was measured using a portion of the Regulatory Focus, Work Engagement, and Job Burnout Model developed by Dai et al. (2021; see Appendix B). This model has proven reliability with correlation coefficients between 0.82 and 0.90. This instrument was previously used in research for hotel employees. The Cronbach's alpha, specifically for the work engagement portion was 0.95, with all components having a Cronbach's alpha of over 0.90, thus providing reliability (Dai et al., 2021). The portion of this instrument that will be used is the "work engagement" portion which includes eight instruments using a Likert scale rating. This method is consistent with past research as it also considers the impacts of burnout. Permissions for use of this instrument have been granted through Walden University.

Last, I used the items in Appendix C to measure demographics. The measurement of race will be determined using the question from the 2020 U.S. Census. Since 1970, the U.S. Census Bureau (2018) has used a social definition of race to help with antidiscrimination and funding in the United States. Education will be measured using a question from the U.S. Census Bureau (2021), which has been used since 1990 as part of the American Community Survey. I included an item on company tenure to aid in determining the impact of tenure on burnout.

Operationalization

I did not manipulate or impose any treatments on the study variables. The operational definition of burnout was based on the definition used by Maslach which is defined as “a state of exhaustion in which one is cynical about the value of one’s occupation and doubtful of one’s ability to perform”. Both measurements being used will use a Likert scale to measure burnout and performance. The MBI uses a Likert scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*everyday*), and burnout is determined using the mean of the responses. The Job Performance Scale uses a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*weak or bottom 10%*) to 5 (*best or top 10%*).

Data Analysis Plan

A logistic regression analysis was used to determine the presence of burnout within the participants and its impact on employee engagement. The Stepwise option in regression was used to predict burnout from demographics. This will help to determine the different factors impact on burnout. This data was entered into SPSS and used along with an ordinal logistic regression analysis. Using an ordinal logistic regression analysis

allowed for clarity concerning the impact of the collected demographics on the level and/or presence of burnout. The rationale for using burnout, demographics, and employee engagement is that in past research, there has been shown to be a relationship among these variables. Various studies have been completed using the same variables in different professions including the medical and retail professions. This specific method was chosen based on review of past literature as well as the RQs. The ordinal data will be interpreted using a regression analysis, specifically, logistic regression within SPSS. Using these methods will assist with identifying if there is a relationship between burnout and employee engagement.

Threats to Validity

In the proposed research, a threat to external validity includes selection bias. It is imperative that the selection represents the sample that is needed. In this case, participants should be inbound call takers that are taking calls for emergency roadside assistance. To overcome this threat, when contacting leadership of the call center organizations, it will be discussed that these are the types of participants needed. To verify, the surveys will only be sent to those that have inbound call acceptance as part of their assigned job role. Another threat to external validity includes specificity to variables of burnout and performance for automotive emergency roadside assistance therefore making it difficult to generalize results.

Since this research used employees as participants, it is likely that the job role can change along with the time that employees are working with the organization. Over time, employees may change their views on the role which could impact burnout. Also,

changes in technology and job role may occur. This will be addressed by ensuring that the time period for the proposed research is explained within the results. Also, by clearly communicating with participants and organization management that this research is specific to the time that it was conducted.

Last, a threat to construct validity for the proposed research is that burnout is a widespread concept. It is imperative that a specific definition for burnout be provided to participants and outlined within results. In this case, the operational definition of burnout is being used specifically to call center representatives versus burnout in general which can apply to various job roles and duties. This will be addressed via written communication with both the organization management as well as participants.

Ethical Procedures

In relation to ethical concerns for data collection there are a few issues that may need to be addressed. The first issue would be incomplete surveys which are surveys that are less than 90% complete. The way that this will be addressed will be to remove incomplete surveys from the sample size. Ideally, more participants will be contacted than the minimum number of participants, this way, if there are some surveys that are not completed the minimal requirement will still be met. For the proposed research, the data will be kept anonymous, and participants will not be required to enter name and/or email addresses. Results will be presented to the call center organizations via written communication after completing the data analysis. The data will be kept by researcher, Shyriah Marshall, and will be stored via online survey use. Data will be destroyed upon successful completion of dissertation. In addition to the bias and ethical issues, another

ethical concern could be a conflict of interest, since the researcher has worked in similar environments in the past.

Summary

The approach used in this investigation was in line with quantitative research methods. This information will be communicated to various call center organizations to gain proper permissions to distribute questionnaires. The results of the surveys will be given in a later chapter, along with being shared with the organizations that participate. Following the ethical procedures as well as instructions from IRB, the study will be completed using at least 24 participants. Combining the questionnaires allows for a better understanding of the relationship between burnout, demographics, and employee engagement.

Using unique questionnaires will also allow for more organization specific data, which could be helpful for the proposed research. The most important part of collecting this data will be to make sure that the integrity of the research is not compromised, this will be done by working closely with the IRB to ensure that all steps are followed properly. The findings of the proposed research will be explained in detail in Chapter 4 to follow. This will include time frames, organizational details, and details pertaining to the pilot study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The research discussed in Chapters 1-3 focused on examining the relationship between call center agent burnout and employee engagement. This research uses a quantitative cross-sectional method. Ordinal logistic regression was used to gain clarity on not only the presence of burnout and its impact on employee engagement but also to gain clarity on the impact that demographics have on burnout. The purpose of this research was to discover answers to the following RQs:

RQ1: Are demographics such as gender, race, tenure, and years of education a predictor of burnout in customer service representatives?

Ha1: Demographics are not a predictor of burnout in customer service representatives.

H01: Demographics are a predictor of burnout in customer service representatives.

RQ2: What is the relationship between employee burnout and employee engagement rated by the Regulatory Focus, Work Engagement, and Job Burnout Model and the MBI-GS?

Ha2: There is a relationship between employee burnout and the employee engagement of call center advocates providing inbound customer support.

H02: There is no relationship between employee burnout and the employee engagement of call center representatives providing inbound customer support.

In Chapter 4 I will discuss data collection procedures, sample representation, results, and summary.

Data Collection

The data for this research were conducted based on the agreed upon guidelines approved by Walden University IRB. The initial plan for this research was to collect data using social media. Through this process, the survey flyer and link were shared to various groups on social media including LinkedIn and Facebook via my personal pages as approved by IRB. However, over time, I was not getting the number of responses needed. After several months of attempting to collect data, with the approval of my dissertation committee the data collection process was changed and approved by IRB. With the new approval the data for this research were collected using SurveyMonkey participant pool. This included paying \$1,225 for research participants that were provided by SurveyMonkey. I covered this expense out of pocket. Overall, the new process took approximately 1 week to complete. The response rate to this survey was greater than 100% as oversampling was used to ensure that the minimum requirements were met. A total of 398 participants completed this study. Through data cleaning, due to being incomplete, four surveys were removed from the data. After cleaning was conducted 394 responses remained which is over the 350 responses needed for the research. The survey was created within SurveyMonkey and shared directly through their participant pool.

Additionally, two new variables were created using the compute variable function in SPSS. The new variables created were labeled burnout and engagement. This was done to ensure that the data collected was acceptable for the statistical analysis used. Using this

function also allowed for me to measure these variables as whole from the participant pool versus using individual questions from each response. This function allowed for me to measure the mean of each response and compare them to each other for correlation.

Demographics

The participant pool consisted of inbound call center agents within emergency services. Many of the respondents were White (73.6%) and male (53.6%). Most respondents had 6–10 years of experience (30.5%) and bachelor's degrees (26.4%). Further demographic details are provided in Table 1.

Table 1*Demographics*

Variable	<i>F</i>	%
Sex		
Male	211	53.6
Female	181	45.9
Prefer not to say	2	0.5
Race		
White	290	73.6
Black or African American	31	7.9
American Indian or Alaska Native	6	1.5
Chinese	15	3.8
Filipino	3	0.8
Asian Indian	18	4.6
Vietnamese	3	0.8
Korean	2	0.5
Japanese	1	0.3
Native Hawaiian	2	0.5
Samoan	1	0.3
Chamorro	1	0.3
Other Asian	11	2.8
Other Pacific Islander	10	2.5
Education		
Regular high school diploma	47	11.9
GED or alternative credential	27	6.9
Some college credit, but less than 1 year of college	21	5.3
1 year or more of college, no degree	30	7.6
Associates degree	39	9.9
Bachelor's degree	104	26.4
Master's degree	87	22.1
Professional degree	17	4.3
Doctoral degree	22	5.6
Tenure (years)		
< 1	69	17.5
1–5	102	25.9
6–10	120	30.5
10–15	55	14.0
> 15	48	12.2
Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin		
No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	304	77.2
Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano	47	11.9
Yes, Puerto Rican	9	2.3
Yes, Cuban	6	1.5
Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin	28	7.1

Note. GED = general equivalency diploma.

Overall, each demographic was represented throughout this study, as shown in Table 1. I collected data specifically from call center agents within emergency contact centers by setting these requirements via SurveyMonkey. This population also represents diverse populations not only by race/ethnicity, but by education, experience, and gender.

Results

For engagement, there was a weighted mean of 4.7 and a weighted standard deviation of 1.35. This showed a high level of engagement rated by the Regulatory Focus, Work Engagement, and Job Burnout Measurement. Additionally, there was a weighted mean of 4.82 and a weighted standard deviation of 1.135 for burnout which indicates mid-level burnout as rated by the MBI scoring provided by Mind Garden.

Reliability Tests

As discussed in Chapter 3, each test used had already been tested and confirmed reliability. For burnout, the Cronbach's alpha was 0.925, and for engagement, it was 0.933. Therefore, confirming the reliability of each measure used, which had already been confirmed as reliable based on previous work conducted by previous scholars.

Assumptions Test

To test for any violations of assumptions with logistic regression analysis assumption tests for multicollinearity, homoscedasticity, outliers, and normality.

Multicollinearity

According to Bayman and Dexter (2021) multicollinearity arises when one or more independent variables in regression models are highly correlated with one another. Generally, a variance inflation factor above 5 indicates a high correlation, which would

indicate that multicollinearity is present. As shown in Table 2, the highest variance inflation factor for this research was 1.052 indicating that multicollinearity was not present.

Table 2

Multicollinearity Assumption

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Collinearity statistics	
		B	SE	B			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	3.963	.140		28.394	<.001		
	Please identify your current years of service within this organization:	.308	.046	.321	6.713	<.001	1.000	1.000
2	(Constant)	3.555	.176		20.239	<.001		
	Please identify your current years of service within this organization:	.282	.046	.294	6.169	<.001	.976	1.024
	What is the highest degree or level of school that you have completed?	.093	.025	.178	3.728	<.001	.976	1.024
3	(Constant)	4.099	.262		15.647	<.001		
	Please identify your current years of service within this organization:	.261	.046	.272	5.684	<.001	.950	1.052
	What is the highest degree or level of school that you have completed?	.087	.025	.166	3.500	<.001	.969	1.032
	Please identify your sex	-.309	.111	-.132	-2.779	.006	.961	1.041

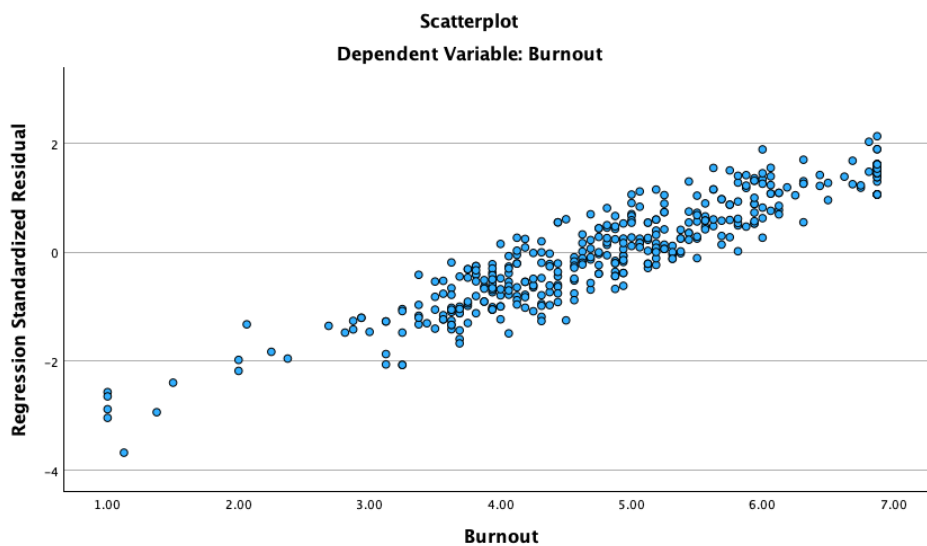
Note. The dependent variable was burnout. VIF = variance inflation factor.

Homoscedasticity

Additionally, this data was also tested for homoscedasticity to determine the variance. Figure 1 shows a scatterplot that was created via SPSS and indicates that homoscedasticity is present amongst this data.

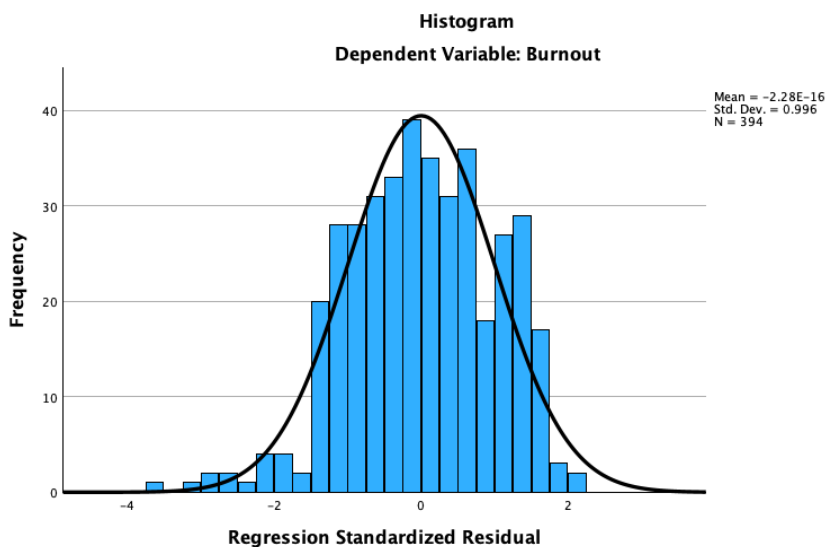
Figure 1

Burnout Scatterplot



Outliers

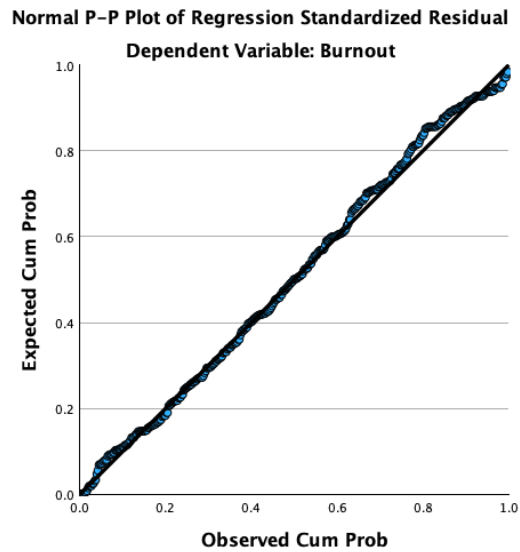
This data was also tested for any outliers that were outside of the standard deviation. If there were any outliers, they would have been removed from this data. However, there were no outliers that exceeded the standard deviation as shown in the histogram in Figure 2.

Figure 2*Burnout Histogram**Normality*

Last, a test for normality was completed. This was done to ensure that normality was not violated. The probability–probability plot in Figure 3 indicates that the data was normally distributed as there is not significant difference between the expected and observed cumulative probability.

Figure 3

Normal Probability–Probability Plot of Regression Standardized Residual: Burnout



Statistical Findings

RQ1 was, Are demographics such as gender, race, tenure, and years of education a predictor of burnout in customer service representatives? I performed a logistic regression using stepwise to determine whether demographics were a predictor of burnout. In Table 3, Model 1 when considering only tenure, indicates regression significance $F(1,392) = 45.07, p < .001$, Model 2 when considering both also indicated significance $F(2,391), p < .001$, and Model 3 indicated significance as well $F(3,390), p < .001$. Race was excluded due to it not causing a positive change within burnout.

Table 3*Model Summary*

Model	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> ²	Adjusted <i>R</i> ²	<i>SE</i> of the estimate	Change statistics					Durbin-Watson statistic
					<i>R</i> ² change	<i>F</i> change	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	<i>p F</i> change	
1	.321 ^a	.103	.101	1.12991	.103	45.070	1	392	<.001	
2	.366 ^b	.134	.129	1.11177	.031	13.896	1	391	<.001	
3	.388 ^c	.151	.144	1.10234	.017	7.723	1	390	.006	1.922

Note. The dependent variable was burnout.

^a The predictor (constant) was current years of service within this organization.

^b The predictors (constant) were current years of service within this organization and the highest degree or level of school completed.

^c The predictors (constant) were current years of service within this organization, highest degree or level of school completed, and sex

As shown in Table 4, race was not shown to be statistically significant within either model. This is likely due to the number of options listed for race possibly causing confusion for SPSS. In Chapter 5, I will discuss this as a limitation for this study. Table 5 also shows that race has a negative impact on burnout and was not statistically significant. Since there is a significance with the model for RQ1 for tenure, gender, and education the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Table 4*Excluded Variables**Excluded Variables^a*

Model		Beta		Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics	
		In	t			Tolerance	Minimum VIF
1	Please identify your sex	-.147 ^b	-3.056	.002	-.153	.968	1.033 .968
	Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin?	.027 ^b	.571	.568	.029	1.000	1.000 1.000
	Please identify your race:	-.031 ^b	-.645	.519	-.033	.988	1.012 .988
	What is the highest degree or level of school that you have completed?	.178 ^b	3.728	<.001	.185	.976	1.024 .976
2	Please identify your sex	-.132 ^c	-2.779	.006	-.139	.961	1.041 .950
	Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin?	.036 ^c	.765	.445	.039	.997	1.003 .974
	Please identify your race:	-.011 ^c	-.227	.820	-.012	.975	1.025 .963
3	Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin?	.022 ^d	.469	.639	.024	.985	1.015 .949
	Please identify your race:	-.013 ^d	-.283	.778	-.014	.975	1.026 .942

- a. Dependent Variable: Burnout
- b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Please identify your current years of service within this organization:
- c. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Please identify your current years of service within this organization:, What is the highest degree or level of school that you have completed?
- d. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), Please identify your current years of service within this organization:, What is the highest degree or level of school that you have completed?, Please identify your sex

RQ2 was, What is the relationship between employee burnout and employee engagement rated by the Regulatory Focus, Work Engagement, and Job Burnout Model and the MBI-GS? I used Pearson's correlation to determine whether there is a relationship between the level of employee burnout and the level of employee engagement as well as its strength. It was determined that employee engagement and burnout had a positive correlation and were statistically significant ($r = .423, p = <.001$) as shown in Table 5. Increases in engagement were correlated with increases in burnout. Employees that were more engaged showed a higher level of burnout. These results are also summarized in a scatterplot (see Figure 1). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

Table 5*Burnout and Engagement Correlation*

Variable		Burnout	Engagement
Burnout	Pearson r	1	.423*
	p (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	394	394
Engagement	Pearson r	.423**	1
	p (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	394	394

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

To further examine the relationship between engagement and burnout, I ran a canonical correlation via SPSS. The instrument items were coded as Burnout 1–16 and Engagement 1-9. There were nine correlations that were found through this method. The first canonical correlation was found to be statistically significant with a value of .751 (Wilks Statistic = .172, $F = 5.074$, and $p < .001$). The second canonical correlation was also found to be statistically significant at a lower value of .524 (Wilks Statistic = .395, $F = 3.074$, and $p < .001$). The third canonical correlation was also found to be statistically significant at a lower value than the first two correlations with a value of .455 (Wilks Statistic = .544, $F = 2.425$, $p < .001$). The fourth canonical correlation showed statistical

significance as well with the lowest value of the four of .379 (Wilks Statistic = .687, $F = 1.861$, and $p < .001$). These values are shown in Table 6.

The remaining five canonical correlations were not statistically significant. Correlation 5 had a value of .292 (Wilks Statistic = .877, $F = 1.407$, and $p = .023$), Correlation 6 had a lower correlation value of .241 (Wilks Statistic = .931, $F = 1.137$, and $p = .251$), Correlation 7 had a lower correlation value of .196 (Wilks Statistic = .931, $F = .902$, and $p = .619$), Correlation 8 had a lower value of .140 (Wilks Statistic = .968, $F = .679$, and $p = .834$), and last, Correlation 9 had the lowest value of .111 (Wilks Statistic = .988, $F = .585$, and $p = .790$). Overall, these values support that there is correlation between engagement and burnout; however, these results also show that there are likely stronger instruments to use to further evaluate the relationship between the variables.

Table 6

Canonical Correlations

	Correlation	Eigenvalue	Wilks statistic	F	Numerator df	Denominator df	p
1	.751	1.292	.172	5.074	144.000	2931.860	<.001
2	.524	.378	.395	3.074	120.000	2646.486	<.001
3	.455	.261	.544	2.425	98.000	2355.331	<.001
4	.379	.168	.687	1.861	78.000	2057.175	<.001
5	.292	.093	.802	1.407	60.000	1750.392	.023
6	.241	.062	.877	1.137	44.000	1432.785	.251
7	.196	.040	.931	.902	30.000	1101.375	.619
8	.140	.020	.968	.679	18.000	752.000	.834
9	.111	.012	.988	.585	8.000	377.000	.790

Note. The null hypothesis for the Wilks test is that there are no correlations.

Summary

This research provided an understanding between the relationship between burnout and demographics as well as between engagement and burnout within inbound call center agents. There was a positive relationship between engagement and burnout, suggesting that more engaged employees also reported higher levels of burnout. Additionally, a canonical analysis was performed to further examine the relationship. Out of the nine items used to determine engagement, four were shown to be statistically significant and five were not. This suggests that the correlation does exist, however, it is not highly correlated with burnout with all items. In terms of demographics there was statistical significance between burnout, tenure, education, and gender. However, there was not statistical significance between burnout and race. Ultimately, the null hypothesis for both RQs was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis were accepted. There was also an in-depth review of statistical assumptions, model testing, and an in-depth review of the results to each RQ. This chapter provided the demographics of the sample population, statistical findings, and assumption analysis.

In the final chapter, Chapter 5, I will discuss an interpretation of the findings in comparison to previous research. I will also review the limitations, reliability, and generalization of the study. I will also provide additional details on the analysis conducted along with the instruments used and suggestions for future research. Last, I will provide recommendations for future research and discuss positive social change implications to conclude the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Call center workers are tasked with performing work under stress and are generally charged with providing customer service with positive emotions (Chaudhary, Nasir, Rahman, and Seikh, 2023). Additionally, call centers tend to experience very high turnover rates for various reasons and this issue continues to go unresolved (Garrido-Lopez, Schaefer, and Moss, 2023). The purpose of this research was to determine the relationship between burnout and engagement as well as the relationship between burnout and demographics, specifically age, gender, race, tenure, and years of education. There is plenty of research available concerning call center employees, however, the research for call center employees who work in emergency roadside assistance was very minimal. The overall purpose for this study was to examine the relationship between call center agent burnout and engagement while also examining predicting factors such as demographics.

The participants for this study included inbound call center representatives within emergency roadside assistance and the surveys were collected via SurveyMonkey. The independent variables for this research were burnout and demographics and the dependent variable was employee engagement. Burnout was measured using the MBI, and demographics were measured using questions from the U.S. Census Bureau. Engagement was measured using the Regulatory Focus, Work Engagement, and Job Burnout Model. Overall, there was a statistical significance in the relationship between burnout and age, gender, tenure, and years of education. However, there was not a significant relationship between race and burnout. This will be discussed within the study

limitations portion of this chapter. Additionally, there was a statistically significant relationship between engagement and burnout indicating that the more engaged an employee is the more likely they are to experience burnout. In the remainder of this chapter, I will provide interpretations of the findings, limitations of the study, future recommendations, and implications concerning positive social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

Research Question 1

RQ1 for this research was, Are demographics such as gender, race, tenure, and years of education a predictor of burnout in customer service representatives?. This was split into three different models using stepwise to add in predictors at each level. Model 1 consisted of only tenure and showed regression significance $F(1,392) = 45.07, p < .001$, Model 1 also showed the highest variance of 45%. Model 2 consisted of tenure and years of education resulted in regression significance $F(2,391) = 13.89, p < .001$ and Model 3 consisted of tenure, years of education, and gender also showing regression significance $F(3,390) = 7.72, p < .001$. Race was not shown to have statistical significance.

Ultimately, these findings are in line with previous research within this topic. Older research shows that there is not a significant relationship between burnout and demographics, while some research, when viewing demographics as a mediator variable shows that there is a significant relationship (Matin, Kalali, and Anvari, 2012). This could be due to the different definitions for demographics and how they are measured. As an example, Martin et al. (2012) used gender, marital status, education level, and age as demographics while this research used gender, tenure, race, and years of education as

demographics. A more clear and standard definition of demographics may also result in changes in its statistical value which can also be viewed as a limitation for not only this research, but past and future research as well.

Research Question 2

RQ2 was, What is the relationship between employee burnout and employee engagement rated by the Regulatory Focus, Work Engagement, and Job Burnout Model and the MBI-GS? A Pearson's correlation was conducted resulting in rejecting the null hypothesis as there was a positive correlation between burnout and engagement ($r = .423$, $p = <.001$). To further examine the relationship between burnout and engagement a canonical correlation was also run resulting in four canonical correlations with statistical significance and four canonical correlations that were not statistically significant.

This RQ was formed with the use of the JD-R model as well as Maslach's theory of burnout for the framework. The MBI has shown reliability and validity and has been used in research since its original inception in the 1980s to measure burnout. While the JD-R theory has been used in past research, the instruments used did not necessarily address the JD-R theory. Both engagement and burnout have been used in past research where their relationship has been studied, however, this research adds to these theories by examining their relationship specifically in emergency roadside assistance representatives.

Limitations

The completed research was not done without limitation in various areas. The first is generalization, while the study was a large population for dissertation research sample

sizes with 394 responses, this is still a limited population. This study was restricted to only those within emergency call center representatives and could be hard to generalize. Changing this restriction could have opened this study and allowed for the results to be more generalized. Another limitation is the demographic of people that completed the survey. Of the participants there were more men (53.6%) than women (45.9%) that completed this survey and the participants were predominately White (73.6%), which can also contribute to the limited generalizability of the study.

There were also some limitations with the research design and instruments used. Using a quantitative approach was fitting for the research, however, it does cause some limitations. Some of the limitation with the approach was that quantitative research tends to require larger sample sizes (Dehalwar & Sharma, 2023) and due to the design, there are limits to the type of data collection that can be done which is mostly restricted to surveys. There were also limitations with the instruments used to measure demographics, engagement, and burnout. Using the Regulatory Focus, Work Engagement, and Job Burnout instrument did prove to be reliable, however, there are stronger instruments that measure engagement. Using other models may have allowed for more results that explore the JD-R model further. With the MBI there were some limitations as well, such as having to decide on the best version to use. The different versions have different questions and using the general survey could have limited the data. Last, when using the U.S. Census Bureau to measure demographics it created a limitation when determining race. While the idea was to determine race the response options were more geared towards ethnicity. As a result, the demographics measure was too convoluted for SPSS

resulting in limitations and errors with analyzing. It may have been a better choice to use simplicity with evaluating race such as making the options clearer (e.g., Black, White, and other). Using a simpler response may have changed the results and/or analysis of demographics and burnout. Overall, with these limitations the research does still add to the current field research.

Recommendations

While call center jobs continue to grow and expand with the use of new technology, working from home, and so forth, there is still a need to explore burnout within call centers. It would be beneficial to continue to expand the burnout research within emergency roadside assistance centers. It may be more beneficial to survey participants from one call center versus a variety of call center agents within different organizations. Doing so may give HR practitioners and organizational leadership more insight on how to apply the research to their organization. The recommendation for call center agents is to use a larger population for generalization as well as applying the research to other call center roles such as outbound, different departments, and so forth. It is also recommended that scholars use stronger instruments to measure engagement and to further explore the JD-R model and engagement.

Additionally, it is recommended that scholars explore a different research design. Using a qualitative method can further expand the research in this field. This would allow for the use of other data collection methods such as interviews to explore the relationship. A different design may also allow for a smaller sample size making it easier to obtain research. It is also recommended to use a stronger instrument to measure engagement,

doing so may allow for deeper analysis and understanding of the relationship between burnout and engagement. Last, it is recommended to explore different research methods that may bring more diversity and overcome the current research being predominately White men. Overall, using these recommendations will help to further expand research concerning burnout, call centers, and engagement.

Implications

Research pertaining to call centers, burnout, and engagement have been studied for many years. Burnout has been prominent in call centers for many years and continues to be an issue. There are many factors that lead to burnout within call center employees such as constant communication with customers, the pressure to provide high customer service, all while dealing with high call volume (Garrido-Lopez, Schaffer, and Moss, 2023). As discussed in Chapter 1, the findings from this research can be used to influence positive social change on various levels including individual, organizational, and societal to an extent. This will be further discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

Positive Social Change

This research can have an impact on various levels including individual, organizational, and even an impact on general society. This research adds to the previous research conducted in this field by having similar findings of engagement influencing burnout. As mentioned in Chapter 1, with the type of calls that are handled in emergency roadside assistance call centers there is potential to impact all drivers near the disabled vehicles. According to Lemonaki, Xanthopoulou, Bardos, Karademas, and Simos (2021) burnout can lead to cognitive failures when it comes to performance. Call center agents

that are experiencing burnout are likely to make more mistakes on these calls, which impacts customer wait time, customer satisfaction, and essentially the traffic surrounding the disabled vehicle.

This research can be used to influence call center organizations as well. This research can be used by HR practitioners to influence leadership training and to monitor employee performance. HR practitioners can use this research to train leaders on how to recognize signs of burnout, teaching them to monitor their highly engaged employees, and empower organizations to make the necessary changes to assist with reducing burnout. This research can also be used as a tool to monitor some of the benefits offered by the organization that can assist with reducing burnout such as the implementation of stress management, wellness tactics, and stronger performance management (Gabriel and Aguinis, 2022).

Last, this research can also influence positive social change at the individual level. Burnout has been known to go beyond impacting individuals' performance but can impact their cognitive function (Lemonaki, Xanthopoulou, Bardos, Karademos, and Simos, 2021). This research can be used to help individuals understand the relationship between engagement and burnout as well as help them to understand how demographics impacts burnout. This research can be used to help individuals to recognize signs of burnout within themselves and aid in teaching ways to better manage and reduce burnout.

Theoretical Implications

Both Maslach's multidimensional theory and the JD-R model have been used to explore burnout and its impact on engagement. However, this research is the first to use

these models and explore them within emergency roadside assistance. Other researchers have used different methods to examine the relationship between burnout and engagement. The findings from this research indicate that demographics can influence burnout and that the more an employee is engaged the more likely they are to experience burnout. The use of an emergency roadside assistance organization has the potential to open doors for future research concerning call centers in different fields and determining how those fields may impact the relationships with burnout, demographics, and engagement. Additionally, the JD-R model has also been used for many years of call center research. However, it is recommended that scholars use instruments that are more in line with the JD-R model as mentioned earlier in this chapter. This study has filled the gap in literature as it pertains to the use of emergency roadside assistance call centers along with the use of both demographics and engagement as predictors of burnout.

Conclusion

This research was started with the intention to understand the relationship between burnout and engagement within emergency roadside assistance call centers. The relationship between burnout and demographics was also examined within this research. The statistical significance of this research supports the research of past practitioners. The research found that there was a statistically significant relationship between burnout and engagement ultimately highlighting that more engaged employees are usually more burned out. There was also a statistically significant relationship between demographics and burnout which also supports the findings of past practitioners.

The use of both the Maslach's multidimensional theory of burnout and the JD-R model was very beneficial in shaping the RQs and relating to previous research. This study aids in closing a gap in literature as it relates to call center employees, specifically those in emergency roadside assistance. As call center organizations continue to grow, change, and adapt to new work cultures such as work from home, new technology, and so forth it is important to recognize the amount of pressure this could be putting onto call center workers. This research can potentially be used by HR practitioners to implement new policies, training, and our procedures to assist with burnout within call centers.

Call center employees are always at risk of burnout as they attempt to meet the demands of each of their challenging roles. Call center employees within emergency roadside assistance face a unique set of challenges within their roles as there are many other factors that influence the direction of a call that they may receive. There are times within emergency roadside assistance call centers where there is strenuous emotional labor that must be completed such as showing empathy to customers calling in. This research can help to begin the process of reducing burnout within call centers by having further examined the relationships between burnout and engagement, and demographics. Overall, this study can influence HR practitioners and leadership within call center organizations to make changes to reduce burnout and encourage higher job satisfaction, performance, and engagement within employees. This research can influence positive social change on individuals, organizations, and society by providing an understanding of the relationship between burnout and engagement to assist with reducing the level of burnout within call centers.

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Appendix A: Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey

1. I feel emotionally drained from work.
2. In my opinion, I am good at my work.
3. I doubt the significance of my work.

Respondents will answer responses using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 6 (*every day*).

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Sample Items:

MBI - Human Services Survey - MBI-HSS:

I feel emotionally drained from my work.

I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.

I don't really care what happens to some recipients.

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I feel emotionally drained from my work.

I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.

I don't really care what happens to some patients.

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MBI - Educators Survey - MBI-ES:

I feel emotionally drained from my work.

I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.

I don't really care what happens to some students.

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Cont'd on next page

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2023MBI - General Survey - MBI-GS:

I feel emotionally drained from my work.

In my opinion, I am good at my job.

I doubt the significance of my work.

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MBI - General Survey for Students - MBI-GS (S):

I feel emotionally drained by my studies.

In my opinion, I am a good student.

I doubt the significance of my studies.

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Sincerely,

Robert Most

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Appendix B: Regulatory Focus, Work Engagement, and Job Burnout-- Model

I used the following question items related to work engagement:

I am motivated at work

In my job position, I consider myself handy and energetic

I am passionate about my work

My job inspired me

When I get up in the morning, I really want to go to work

I feel happy when I am busy with work

I am proud of my work

I am very focused on my work

I overdo it at work

All items are based on a 5-point Likert scale with anchors ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*).

Dai, You-De, Altinay, Levent, Zhuang, Wen-Long, & Chen, Kuan-Tai. (2021).

Work engagement and job burnout? Roles of regulatory foci, supervisors' organizational embodiment and psychological ownership. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, Vol 46, 114-122. doi:

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Appendix C: Demographics

Gender:

Please identify your sex:

Male, Female, Prefer Not To Answer

Ethnicity:

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin?

No, not of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin

Yes, Mexican, Mexican Am., Chicano

Yes, Puerto Rican

Yes, Cuban

Yes, another Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish Origin

Race:

Please identify your race:

White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, Japanese, Native Hawaiian, Samoan, Chamorro, Other Asian, Other Pacific Islander

Company Tenure:

Please identify your current years of service within this organization:

<1 year, 1 – 5 years, 6 – 10 years, 10 – 15 years, 15 years>

Education:

What is the highest degree or level of school that you have completed?

Regular high school diploma

GED or alternative credential

Some college credit, but less than 1 year of college

1 year or more of college, no degree

Associates degree

Bachelor's degree

Master's degree

Professional degree

Doctorate degree

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U.S. Census Bureau. (2021, Nov 20). About educational attainment. Retrieved December 17, 2021, from <https://www.census.gov/topics/education/educational-attainment/about.html>

U.S Census Bureau. (2018) Questions planned for the 2020 census and american community survey. Retrieved December 17, 2021, from <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/2020/operations/planned-questions-2020-acr.pdf>