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## Relationship Between Adjunct Faculty Workplace Inclusion and Burnout in Online Universities

Allisson Kinkade  
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# Walden University

College of Education and Human Sciences

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Allisson Kinkade

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Walden University  
2025

Abstract

Relationship Between Adjunct Faculty Workplace Inclusion and Burnout in Online

Universities

by

Allisson Kinkade

MPhil, Walden University, 2023

MS, Walden University, 2017

BS, Michigan State University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education

Walden University

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## Abstract

Online universities rely on adjunct faculty even though including them in institutional processes is challenging and might be related to burnout. The relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty has not been investigated. The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by instructor age, gender, and the number of years teaching as an adjunct. The conservation of resource theory by Hobfoll was used as the theoretical framework. For this quantitative nonexperimental correlational research design, data from 104 adjunct faculty surveys were analyzed using linear regression with moderation to explore workplace inclusion and burnout, with potential moderation by the instructor's age, gender, and the number of years teaching as an adjunct. The results indicated a statistically significant relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, with the faculty's age being the only moderating variable with statistically significant results ( $p < .001$  and  $p < .034$ , respectively). Adjunct faculty may benefit from the results of this study by building awareness of the need to seek out resources, such as professional development, which might prevent burnout. Online universities may benefit when using these results to better improve working conditions for adjunct faculty employed at their institution, which may see improved retention for adjunct faculty, improved teaching practices, and improved student statistics, prompting positive social change over time.

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## Dedication

This journey is dedicated to my family, especially my husband, Nicholas Kinkade, who kept me motivated when I felt burned out, and to my twin sister, Dr. Amy Coffell, who always knew I could accomplish this goal.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

There has been a growing number of adjunct faculty in online universities for the past 4 decades (Gelman et al., 2022; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). As online universities moved away from tenured or full-time faculty to fill the instructional gap, adjunct or part-time faculty grew in numbers and job demands (Spinrad et al., 2022; Turner & Garvis, 2023). Moreu and Brauer (2022) studied how faculty inclusion influenced teaching practices within online universities and found that inclusive teaching practices hold promise and should be considered in future efforts. While Hardy et al. (2017) studied the working conditions and burnout of adjunct faculty and found that online universities adjunct faculty employment includes job insecurities and a link to negative attitudes. The combination of adjunct inclusion within the online university and the possible burnout amongst this population provided interest for future studies in a society where thousands of adjunct faculty members are employed yearly (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020).

Chapter 1 includes a summary of the recent literature, followed by the study's problem statement and purpose statement. I present the research questions; associated hypotheses; and the conservation of resources (COR) theory, which is the study's theoretical framework. Also discussed are the nature of the study, definitions of terms, assumptions and delimitations, limitations, and the significance of the study. The chapter ends with a summary and a transition to Chapter 2.

## **Background**

The use of adjunct faculty has grown in recent years as higher education institutions capitalized on using online formats and less expensive faculty (Cooper et al., 2019; Spinrad et al., 2022). Gelman et al. (2022) found that as the number of adjunct faculty increases, so does the importance and dependency on adjunct faculty. Turner and Garvis (2023) reported that the job demands of faculty are increasing and becoming a significant concern for the institution. As the job demands increased, adjunct faculty felt higher levels of stress and burnout, low pay, inadequate benefits, limited support, and exclusion within the institution (Hardy et al., 2017; Turner & Garvis, 2023). Tongo et al. (2023) found that employee workplace inclusion had a significantly positive effect on organizational productivity; specifically, an inclusive workplace resulted in a positive work environment, which gave the employee a high sense of belonging and increased employee retention. I conducted the current study to address the gap in knowledge on the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

## **Problem Statement**

The research problem addressed through this study was that little research has been conducted on the possible connection between workplace inclusion and the rise of burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities. This is an important gap in the literature because the use of adjunct faculty in higher education has grown significantly over the past 4 decades (Butters & Gann, 2022; Hardy et al., 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020; Starcher, 2017). Matos and Kasztelnik (2023) stated that as online

education options continue to grow, the use of adjunct faculty also grows, creating an instructional gap in higher education institutions.

With the growth of online higher education, online universities have had new concerns about employing adjunct faculty. Burnout in adjunct faculty has increased due to higher demands in their work environments (Agarwal & Bansal, 2021; Savchenko et al., 2022; Turner & Garvis, 2023). Jeon et al. (2022) reported that job burnout was negatively associated with workplace resources. Institutions started inclusion efforts to address all employees' working conditions, including part-time adjunct faculty (Matos & Kasztelnik, 2023). Workplace inclusion led to developing and improving institutional policies and access to resources that ensure educational quality and nondiscrimination (Solis-Grant et al., 2023). Considerable research has been conducted on the importance of inclusion in higher education institutions; however, less is known about the possible connection between adjunct faculty inclusion at online universities and the rise in educator burnout (Kant & Shanker, 2021; Turner & Garvis., 2023).

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by instructor age, gender, and the number of years teaching as an adjunct. Hardy et al. (2017) discussed the ever-changing job role expectations of adjunct faculty at online universities, which created an opportunity to study the relationship between faculty workplace inclusion and adverse reactions, such as burnout, due to those expectations. With the flexibility offered by teaching at online universities, diverse

individuals fill the adjunct faculty positions, resulting in the use of moderating variables.

A moderating variable is a variable that affects the strength and direction of the relationship (Warner, 2012).

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The following research questions (RQs) and hypotheses guided this study:

RQ1: What is the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities?

*H*<sub>01</sub>: There is no relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

*H*<sub>a1</sub>: There is a relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

RQ2: Are instructor age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as an adjunct moderators of the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities?

*H*<sub>02</sub>: Instructor age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as an adjunct are not moderators of the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

*H*<sub>a2</sub>: Instructor age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as an adjunct are moderators of the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.



### **Theoretical Framework for the Study**

I used the COR theory as the theoretical framework for this quantitative study. Hobfoll (1989) developed the COR theory in 1989 postulating how individuals behave when confronted with a stressor, that individuals strive to collect and build their available resources, and a threat to their environment is a missing resource. The primary proposition of the COR theory is that individuals seek to create and support personal and social circumstances that will increase their success (Hobfoll, 1989). In Chapter 2, I will further explain how the individual behaves when confronted with stressors.

The COR theory is grounded in how individuals or employees collect resources to increase their success in their environment, like a workplace, while behaving when confronted with stressors (Hobfoll, 1989). The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by instructor age, gender, and the number of years teaching as an adjunct. As the role of adjunct faculty at online universities continues to grow, exploring their level of collected resources or workplace inclusion and job stressors that can lead to burnout using the COR theory is theoretically valid.

### **Nature of the Study**

To address the research questions in this quantitative study, I employed a nonexperimental correlational research design to study the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by instructor age, gender and the number of years of teaching as adjunct faculty (see Nachmias & Nachmias, 1992). In this quantitative analysis, I used linear regression to

determine the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as adjunct faculty. To collected quantitative data for this analysis, I distributed surveys to online adjunct faculty.

### **Definitions**

In this study, I used the following terms as defined below:

*Adjunct faculty*: Faculty who are employed part-time with the expectation to teach one or more courses in a designated period, such as a semester or academic year (Nica, 2018).

*Burnout*: A state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that resulted from long-term involvement in work situations that were emotionally demanding (Mueller & Morley, 2020).

*Workplace inclusion*: The degree to which an employee recognizes that they are a valued workplace member that satisfies their needs for belongingness and individuality (Shore et al., 2011).

### **Assumptions**

Several assumptions were made in this study. I assumed that each participant survey response was accurate and honest. Another assumption was that when participants gave responses, and I exported the data, the survey functioned appropriately and without issue. An additional assumption was that the likert scale used within the study efficiently captured the best response to each item. These assumptions were necessary to the context

of the study because the results would not accurately represent the population if the assumptions were incorrect.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope of this study was limited to adjunct faculty with experience teaching at an online university. The study was open to adjunct faculty from any higher education institution with experience teaching online as an adjunct. Online education is available worldwide, so including this population increased the external validity. Additionally, because the analysis process included the faculty's age, gender, and years of online teaching experience, these areas of demographic information included no exclusionary measures. The study participants were, however, limited to those who worked at a university due to workplace inclusion survey criteria. These inclusionary boundaries allowed for generalizability for other online universities. I measured burnout in this study using a likert scale, but I did not collect further explanations, resulting in the delimitation of participant responses.

### **Limitations**

One limitation experienced during the data collection phase was using the term "universities," which confused some individuals who work at colleges. Potential participants reached out to me, apologizing that they did not want to risk tainting the results if they were not eligible. Some individuals were not persuaded to participate even with the clarification that had been discussed. Another limitation of this study was the use of regression analysis and the inability to prove causality. Regression analysis can show correlation among variables, and causal relationships may be involved; however, they

cannot be shown within regression analysis (Warner, 2012). Another limitation of a quantitative study is the oversimplification of complex results to numerical data.

### **Significance**

This study is significant in that the results of this study have the potential to offer significant insight into the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by instructor age, gender, and the number of years teaching as an adjunct. The study results fill a gap in understanding by focusing specifically on the inclusion of online adjunct faculty into higher education institutions and educator burnout. The results of this study should aid higher education leadership in supporting online adjunct faculty with inclusionary efforts to reduce educator burnout. The use of adjunct faculty in higher education has grown significantly over the past 4 decades (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020), and improving support for adjunct faculty allows for higher-quality education for students.

### **Summary**

There has been a growth in the use of adjunct faculty in online universities for decades (National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). As the number of adjunct faculty grow within institutions, so do their job demands, leading to burnout in the work environment (Hardy et al., 2017). Moreu and Brauer (2022) studied how the inclusion of adjunct faculty in online universities influences teaching practices; however, little research has been conducted on the possible connection between workplace inclusion and the rise of burnout among adjunct faculty at online universities. Through the lens of the COR theory, the purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship

between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by instructor age, gender, and the number of years teaching as an adjunct. The participants were faculty with experience as adjunct employees in an online university. There were no exclusionary measures on location or experience. This study has the potential to provide insight for higher education leadership into adjunct faculty at online universities and how best to offer an inclusive and healthy work environment. In Chapter 2, I will describe the literature search strategy and present a literature review of recent, peer-reviewed literature relevant to the topic under study. Additionally, Chapter 2 will include an in-depth review of Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory that grounded this study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Little research is available on the possible connection between workplace inclusion and the rise of burnout among adjunct faculty at online universities; therefore, the purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by instructor age, gender, and the number of years teaching as an adjunct. The current literature offers a view into the job role that adjunct faculty experience in online universities (Stokes et al., 2021).

As online course offerings continue to grow, the use of adjunct faculty offers increased flexibility to online institutions that may otherwise not be possible for in-person instruction (Tucker & Quintero-Ares, 2021); however, the adjunct faculty may not see the same advantages (Jacoby & Boyette, 2020). Adjunct faculty are, by the definition provided above, part-time positions that allow the institution to set lower compensation, offer no benefits, and provide no job security beyond the current course offerings (Parsons et al., 2022; Reeder, 2020; Skinner et al., 2023). Additionally, governance discussions do not commonly include adjunct faculty who often feel invisible or voiceless in the institution (Hearn & Burns, 2021; Zito & Schultz, 2020). As adjunct faculty experience these less-than-desirable circumstances, a feeling of burnout may present (Russell et al., 2020).

Due to unsecured teaching assignments and unavailable resources at online universities, adjunct faculty are often isolated from the institution because teaching assignments are not secure and resources are unavailable (Boamah et al., 2022; Cece et

al., 2022; Kolomitro et al., 2020). As online university faculty work in adjunct positions and strive to overcome these conditions, they may start to feel the demands of the position on their work-family balance, higher stress levels, lower job satisfaction, and lower work productivity (Mueller & Morley, 2020; Russell et al., 2020; Savchenko et al., 2022; Turner & Garvis, 2023). Russell et al. (2020) used an online survey with likert scale questions to study the relationship between work demands and burnout. Russell et al. found that while the presence of job demands can lead to burnout, it's the absence of job resources that strengthens the effects of job demands on burnout. The topic of adjunct faculty in online universities and their potential for burnout has been well-studied; however, in the current study I explored these factors by adding workplace inclusion (see Miller & Manata, 2023).

Shore et al. (2011) defined workplace inclusion as the degree to which an employee recognizes that they are a valued workplace member that satisfies their needs for belongingness and individuality. As the adjunct faculty at online universities receive no or minimal formal training, experience little to no professional development or growth opportunities, and do not feel that their expertise is being used to its fullest, a sense of workplace inclusion will be absent (Butters & Gann, 2022; Felber, 2020; Parsons et al., 2022).

In this chapter, I provide the literature search strategies used to conduct an exhaustive literature review of the study variables. Chapter 2 also includes a discussion of the theoretical foundation of Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory, which grounded this study. In the remaining sections of this chapter, I provide an exhaustive literature review.

### **Literature Search Strategy**

I searched the following databases and search engines for applicable literature on the research topic: Academic Search Complete, Education Source, ERIC, Google Scholar, SAGE Journals, ScienceDirect, Taylor and Francis Online, Thoreau multidatabase search, and ProQuest Dissertations. The following keyword search terms were used: *adjunct faculty, adjunct professors, part-time faculty, contingent faculty, online, United States, America, USA, U.S.A., burnout, burnout, burn out, stress, occupational stress, compassionate fatigue, faculty, instructor, professor, college teacher, workplace inclusion, United States of America, higher education, college, university, postsecondary, postsecondary, age, number of years teaching, demographics, population, statistics, and gender*. I limited my search of databases to scientific literature published from 2017–2023; however, I also used older scientific literature for applicable theories and research topic background. Additionally, I limited my research to scientific literature conducted in the United States for a similar target population. The research was also limited to peer-reviewed literature, including academic journals, book reports, and educational statistics. Initial searches using key terms produced thousands of results on online adjunct faculty, workplace inclusion, and burnout, so I combined multiple key terms to reduce the results because these three terms are broad and yielded unrelated results.

### **Theoretical Foundation**

The theoretical framework of this study was the COR theory (COR). Hobfoll (1989) first developed the COR theory in 1989 to explain how individuals work to keep,



protect, and build resources and that what threatens them is the potential or actual loss of resources. It is these efforts that led the way to a new theory of individuals working to create a world of pleasure and success (i.e., increase resources) while simultaneously working to reduce stress (i.e., loss of resources; Hobfoll, 1989).

### **Theory Origin**

The COR theory originated from the work of Cannon and Selye's Cannon-Selye tradition, Sarason and Spielberger's event-perceptions viewpoints, McGrath's homeostatic model of stress, and Lazarus and Folkman's transactional model of coping (Hobfoll, 1989). Walter Cannon, who was likely the first contemporary researcher to apply concepts of stress to humans, concluded that while individuals can withstand low-level stressors, prolonged or severe stressors lead to a breakdown of the human (Hobfoll, 1989). Hans Selye built upon Cannon's work by focusing on stress as a defensive response to an environmental stimulus (Hobfoll, 1989). Sarason and Spielberger proposed the influence of personality traits on an individual's reaction to a stressor, while McGrath reported that stress is the imbalance between an environmental demand and an individual's capabilities (Hobfoll, 1989). In the transactional model of coping, Lazarus and Folkman postulated that a relationship exists between the individual and their interpretation of the environmental stressors (Hobfoll, 1989).

### **Theory Propositions**

The COR theory is based on the definitions of what stress is to a human being and what stressors are in a particular situation (Hobfoll, 1989). In terms of the COR theory, the definition of stress is an avoidable significant factor that leads to emotional upset,

psychological distress, or physical impairment (Hobfoll, 1989). The definition of a stressor is an avoidable stimulus that causes acute, stressor sequences, intermittent, or chronic stressors on the individual (Hobfoll, 1989). An acute stressor is a time-limited stimulus like a visit to the dentist; a stressor sequence includes events that can have multiple stages but eventually conclude, like going through a divorce; an intermittent stressor is an event that occurs repeatedly, usually on a schedule like a student taking exams, and, a chronic stressor is an event that has a prolonged existence for the individual like a lingering illness (Hobfoll, 1989). It is the bridge of these two concepts, stress and stressors, that helps explain the natural goal of an individual to obtain, protect, and build resources that increase what enhances the world around them, and the negative outcome is the loss of those resources (Hobfoll, 1989).

### ***Higher Education Faculty***

Recent literature showed an understanding of how higher education faculty gain and keep resources that aid in their success, professionally and personally, while working to replace lost resources (Ahmad et al., 2018; Namono et al., 2021; Toh et al., 2023). According to Davidson et al. (2010), higher education faculty were likelier to stop resource losses and replenish their resources when they take a leave or sabbatical. Through the comparison of 149 faculty on a sabbatical and 129 faculty active workers with similar credentials and roles, not only did the break from work help the faculty reduce their stress levels and burnout, but they were also able to return to work on what Davidson et al. referred to as a gain spiral result. A gain spiral result is when the individual can use one resource to overcome a stressor, then that experience builds to

help overcome the next stressor, and so on. The presence of job stressors is a missing or lost resource for the faculty because it is a potential threat they must work to overcome. If the faculty cannot gain the resources needed to overcome the threat, they may experience burnout.

### ***Burnout***

As the use of adjunct faculty continues to grow in higher education institutions, Johnston et al. (2020) studied the factors linked to burnout and found that increased use of technology can foster collaborative social and professional development, and should be encouraged for online adjunct faculty. Otto et al. (2021) used the COR theory to explain how a faculty member approaches potential burnout tasks and effects as well as whether the faculty experiences burnout later in the job role, finding that employees can prevent burnout by investing in resources (i.e., voicing ideas for improvement and taking charge) before burnout starts and stating that faculty need more attention to obtain the resources needed to be successful. Expanding on the concept of being mindful of the needed resources to prevent burnout in faculty, Wang et al. (2023) conducted a study to explore how workplace exclusion can increase burnout. They reported that individuals feel exclusion on an individual basis when the individual does not feel to be a part of the group, affecting their motivation to perform daily tasks. These contributions to the literature reinforce the faculty's need to gain and keep resources that will help them succeed in their job roles. As faculty members perform tasks, they are potentially at risk for experiencing burnout if the needed resources are not present; inversely, if the resources are present, the individual can approach the potential burnout situation with

preventative actions. Faculty members can receive support from the preventative measures taken and the workplace inclusion, or sense of belonging, in their roles (Cardon et al., 2023).

### **Literature Review of Key Variables**

Prior to 2020, much of the literature on online adjunct faculty had focused on the mistreatment of these individuals in terms of monetary compensation, job insecurity, and lack of benefits (Childress, 2019). Starting in 2020 and the emergence of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the focus of literature shifted to the need for more online faculty in all roles and the implementation in real-world emergencies (Cutri & Mena, 2020; Harper, 2022). Researchers have collected data on the importance of inclusion in higher education institutions, but less was known about the possible connection between adjunct faculty inclusion at online universities and the rise in educator burnout (Kant & Shanker, 2021; Matos & Kasztelnik, 2023; Turner & Garvis., 2023). Miller and Manata (2023) and Felber (2020) studied the relationship between faculty inclusion and how well they integrated into the institution; however, a gap was identified in how inclusion attempts affect the institutional members. Additionally, managing work environments created one of the most critical occupational hazards today, burnout, and showed the need to research the effects of burnout (Cooper et al., 2019; Edú-Valsania et al., 2022).

### **Adjunct Faculty in Online Universities**

In this section of the literature review, I discuss research focused on the use and attributes of adjunct faculty in online universities.

### ***Characteristics of Adjunct Faculty***

Since 1970, the use of adjunct faculty has increased in higher education institutions, markedly in response to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic restrictions (Jacoby & Boyette, 2020; Tucker & Quintero-Ares, 2021; Zitko & Schultz, 2020). As a result of growing programs and increased student enrollments, many higher education institutions moved away from the use and appointments of tenured faculty members, resulting in higher percentages of adjunct faculty within the institution (Harper, 2020; Hearn & Burns, 2021; Johnston et al., 2020). Many course offerings would not have been possible without the use of adjunct faculty (Harper, 2020; Swann et al., 2021).

**Increased Use, Diversity, and Expertise.** Many universities estimated the use of adjunct faculty members at two thirds of the faculty, making adjunct employment the primary workforce within the institution (Alshehri, 2020; Reeder, 2020; Sam et al., 2021; Swann et al., 2021). Adjunct faculty could be employed on a term-by-term basis with a singular role of teaching (Alshehri, 2020; Reeder, 2020; Sam et al., 2021). Faculty members who filled adjunct positions within an institution comprised a range of demographics, professional backgrounds, and career phases, offering a diverse population with real-time expert knowledge in the field (Jacoby & Boyette, 2020; Norman et al., 2020). Reeder (2020) employed an online survey using a likert scale and open-ended questions to study 215 adjunct faculty at two universities for their retention commitment to remain at their current higher education institution. Using a regression analysis, Reeder found that when institutions invested in the university's adjunct faculty, their commitment levels were higher. Sam et al. (2021) discussed how adjunct faculty within

an institution have the flexibility to support a range of support services, such as research tasks and different course tasks from creation to teaching; however, Alshehri (2020) reported that adjunct faculty are commonly unsupported in their roles, which contradicts their flexibility. Adjunct faculty are often met with no little to no advancement or promotion opportunities and lack official titles, and they are often viewed as a method of controlling costs (Alshehri, 2020; Berlin & Brock, 2021; Gelman et al., 2022; Swann et al., 2021). Berlin and Brock (2022) studied adjunct faculty members for the relationship between working conditions and teaching status on student outcomes. Berlin and Brock found that the combination of experience lead to a dissatisfaction with the student curriculum, which had a bigger effect on the adjunct faculty's working conditions than anything else. Many universities have turned to adjunct faculty positions as a more economical way to meet the needs of the institutions (Harper, 2020). With shrinking budgets and growing student enrollments, adjunct faculty offered increased flexibility to meet the institution's needs (Berlin & Brock, 2021; Hearn & Burns, 2021; Norman et al., 2020; Swann et al., 2021).

**Greater Flexibility.** Adjunct faculty were the primary workforce in higher education institutions over the past four decades and offered increased flexibility (Alshehri, 2020). Institutions commonly hire adjunct faculty exclusively for their teaching responsibilities on an as-needed basis, which allows the institution to increase its course offerings, especially online courses (Reeder, 2020; Skinner et al., 2023; Swann et al., 2021). Adjunct faculty members are more likely to teach undesirable courses that run on weekends or evenings due to greater scheduling flexibility that full-time faculty within

the institution may not have been able to meet (Alshehri, 2020; Butter & Gann, 2022; Jacoby & Boyette, 2020). Additionally, adjunct faculty members offered an extra layer of flexibility for online courses because the provided faculty member support is not impacted by geographical location (Skinner et al., 2023). Hearn and Burns (2021) explored how the use and flexibility of adjunct faculty in universities created more significant obstacles among this population.

### ***Positional Obstacles***

As online universities continued to grow and become more mainstream, more than half of new faculty appointments were to fill the part-time employment needs of the institution (Butters & Gann, 2022; Cutri & Mena, 2020). Higher education institutions profited from adjunct faculty's use in meeting societal needs with increased expert knowledge and scheduling flexibility (Cutri & Mena, 2020). Nevertheless, the shift to adjunct faculty positions in higher education institutions created unfavorable characteristics associated with adjunct positions, including long-term conflicts and increased stressors than typically seen with full-time positions (Norman et al., 2020; Savchenko et al., 2022).

**Lower Pay.** To meet the university's needs while staying within budgetary constraints, adjunct faculty offered financial advantages compared to full-time faculty positions (Skinner et al., 2023). Zitko and Schultz (2020) discussed marginalization and general workplace inequalities that adjunct faculty experience, including lower pay for their services. Alshehri (2020) detailed how many contemporary studies have documented the issue of underpayment for adjunct faculty in their roles within an

institution, including work by Reeder (2020), Jacoby and Boyette (2020), and Gelman et al. (2022). Throughout the literature, faculty used in adjunct positions are often associated with the cost-effectiveness of the institution (Butters & Gann, 2022; Felber, 2020; Gelman et al., 2022). However, this cost-effectiveness was achieved at the expense of the faculty members filling the adjunct positions because adjunct faculty are historically paid less than their full-time counterparts (Felber, 2020; Jacoby & Boyette, 2020; Parsons et al., 2022; Reeder, 2020). Along with lower compensation, institutions offer adjunct faculty members no benefits, which was also commonly associated with these positions within the universities (Harper, 2020).

**No Benefits.** One method of improving the overall financial health of the higher education institution was that part-time faculty employees were not offered benefits (Gelman et al., 2022; Hearn & Burns, 2021). The work of Zitko and Schultz (2020) and Reeder (2020) provided evidence that the most common negative consequence of the adjunct model in higher education was inadequate compensation, which includes no employer-provided benefits. Contemporary literature deliberated the lack of health and retirement benefits associated with working as an adjunct faculty member (Febler, 2020; Gelman et al., 2022; Hearn & Burns, 2021). Additionally, more generalized discussions linked no benefits to adjunct faculty positions throughout the literature, as seen in the work of Jacoby and Boyette (2020), Parsons et al. (2022), and Reeder. The literature also linked the absence of employer-provided benefits to the inability to contribute to an institution entirely and the uncertainty of long-term futures (Jacoby & Boyette, 2020; Parsons et al., 2022).



**Lower Job Security.** The shift of online universities from full-time faculty positions to adjunct faculty positions increased the university's flexibility when offering courses; however, scheduling flexibility meant job insecurity for adjunct faculty members (Skinner et al., 2023). Febler (2020) refers to this situation as employment instability as the role was insecure, and employment opportunities within a single institution would change based on student enrollment needs, which resulted in insecurities for the adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty were commonly employed at more than one online university due to the temporary position they held and the job insecurity they faced (Hearn & Burns, 2021; Parsons et al., 2022; Sam et al., 2021; Zitko & Schultz, 2020). Adjunct faculty faced job insecurity, low pay, and no benefits, which created a culture of unfavorable working conditions (Savchenko et al., 2022).

**Larger Workload.** Adjunct faculty members were more likely to take undesirable courses during weekends or evening hours and take more courses than their full-time counterparts (Alshehri, 2020; Savchenko et al., 2022). While adjunct faculty members worked to overcome lower pay and no benefits, they often took on larger course loads, increasing the support needed for the corresponding students in each course (Boamah et al., 2022; Turner & Garvis, 2023). Agarwal and Bansal (2021) discussed the higher working capacities and longer hours that adjunct faculty experienced at online universities. Combined with the increased workload and the immense amount of technology that adjunct faculty experienced while employed at online universities, the increased workload was commonly a concern when balancing all priorities (Savchenko et al., 2022).

**Decreased Career-Life Balance.** Balancing the workload intensification of online teaching and personal responsibilities had been a topic of contemporary literature (Turner & Garvis, 2023). As adjunct faculty members worked to offset the more prominent obstacles facing them in part-time positions at online universities, they started to notice the boundaries separating work and their personal life becoming blurred, resulting in the corrosion of their work identity and reduced personal time (Boamah et al., 2022; Hearn & Burns, 2021). Boamah et al. studied 645 university faculty members for the relationship between work-life interference and burnout. Using a likert scale questionnaire and a linear regression analysis, Boamah et al. found that work-life interference significantly increased burnout among faculty members. Turner and Garvis discussed that as workloads increased for adjunct faculty members, research opportunities were commonly among the first sacrifices to balance an already overloaded schedule. For adjunct faculty members, promotion opportunities were not professional development plans, as many online universities did not have promotion policies for adjunct positions (Gelman et al., 2022). Many adjunct faculty members could not reach full-time faculty positions, regardless of many years of dedicated service at an institution (Alshehri, 2020; Zitko & Schultz, 2020). Zito and Schultz further explained that adjunct faculty employment can be unpredictable and expendable, based on student enrollments, even as the primary workforce within the online university.

### ***Adjunct Faculty and the Institution***

Online universities commonly overlooked adjunct faculty due to everyone's differing environments within the institution (Boamah et al., 2022). Online universities

were tasked with finding and hiring high-quality adjunct faculty for pre-built course teaching positions assigned to them without a discussion or insight (Alshehri, 2020; Stokes et al., 2021). Within the contemporary literature, adjunct faculty and their perceived experience within an online university were studied. Parsons et al. (2022) reported feelings of invisibility, voicelessness, and segregation when online universities did not provide dignity to their adjunct faculty (Bohonos & Sisco, 2021; Zitko & Schultz, 2020). Alifuddin and Widodo (2021) used a questionnaire with likert scale questions to study the effects of an organization's commitment to their employees on the employee's intention to leave the institution. Many adjunct faculty members reported being excluded from governance meetings and responsibilities, which led to limited decision-making power, no academic freedoms to pursue knowledge without fear of the repercussions, and a lack of autonomy within the courses they teach (Alshehri, 2020; Hearn & Burns, 2021; Sam et al., 2021; Zitko & Schultz, 2020). Many online universities hired faculty into positions with little to no support, resources, or services (Turner & Garvis, 2023).

As the most prominent asset within online universities, adjunct faculty faced insufficient resources and support needed to perform their duties compared to their full-time counterparts (Alshehri, 2020; Bohonos & Sisco, 2021; Norman et al., 2020; Simmons et al., 2022). Simmons et al. studied 927 higher education faculty to examine professional connectedness and workplace fairness differences. Through an online survey with likert scale questions, Simmons et al. found that adjunct faculty expressed concerns about institutional unfairness compared to full-time faculty. The earlier literature included examples of unsupportive institutional practices and policies that did not update

for a part-time workforce and limited access to other employees or leadership for guidance or social support (Agarwal & Bansal, 2021; Alshehri, 2020; Bohonos & Sisco, 2021; Sam et al., 2021). Unique to online universities, adjunct faculty also experienced little to no chance for impromptu meetings, a lack of personal training opportunities on teaching styles or course content, or even access to software that would not be vital in a face-to-face setting (Berlin & Brock, 2021; Hunker & Robb, 2021; Swann et al., 2021). However, a search of the literature also identified items that were not unique to online settings were also impacting adjunct faculty members in universities, including the opportunity to advance professionally and the need to support an interconnected campus that goes beyond the equipment, teaching styles, and content (Bohonos & Sisco, 2021; Burleigh et al., 2021). Later in the literature, the same general themes of working conditions continued to plague the studies' results, including no support outside of the classroom, little to no administrative contact or guidance, missing pertinent information and institutional resources (Butter & Gann, 2022; Gelman et al., 2022; Jung & Welch, 2022; Spinrad et al., 2022). Jung and Welch used an online survey with likert scale questions to study the relationship between how individuals perceive their inclusion in workplace processes and their demographic information. Jung and Welch's research found a connection between an individual's perceived inclusion and demographic information (Jung & Welch, 2022). Also repeated in the literature was the lack of individualized support from the university's departments regarding professional development opportunities, no research opportunities, and overall career growth with participative decision-making processes (Butter & Gann, 2022; Gelman et al., 2022; Jung

& Welch, 2022; Parsons et al., 2022). This isolation within an online setting justified exploring the workplace inclusion of adjunct faculty in online universities in contemporary literature (Skinner et al., 2023).

### **Workplace Inclusion of Adjunct Faculty**

This section of the literature review highlights research focused on the inclusion of adjunct faculty in the online university workplace.

#### ***Inclusion of the Adjunct Role***

**Little to No Formal Preparation.** The use of adjunct faculty in online universities has grown to meet the needs of today's society, and this growth demands special attention to prepare this workforce (Butters & Gann, 2022; Snow et al., 2023). Berlin and Brock (2021) discussed how online universities are not necessarily creating a conducive student learning environment when adjunct faculty members do not have basic institutional training in the learning management system. Training adjunct faculty members almost seemed like an afterthought, with filling courses as the institution's priority (Harper, 2022). Butters and Gann detailed the current situation that many adjunct faculty members experienced within their institution, including limited contact, nonexistent research opportunities, and no formal professional development for effective teaching practices. These obstacles also included little evidence for training on the institution's grading policies and practices (Novotny, 2023). An interesting finding from the Skinner et al. (2023) study was that adjunct faculty desired better training for the institution, implying they wanted to improve their working conditions to serve the students better.

**Lower Working Conditions and Perceived Standing.** The use of adjunct faculty allowed online universities to be more competitive in course offerings because they worked in conditions unlike full-time positions (Skinner et al., 2023). Alshehri (2020) discussed the working conditions of adjunct faculty members within higher education institutions, including a lack of technical, professional, social, and financial support once hired. Structural and policy obstacles contributed to adjunct faculty feeling undervalued or under-appreciated within the institution where they were the primary workforce (Zitko & Schultz, 2020). In some instances, adjunct faculty felt as though they were second-class employees within the institutional culture, and this dissatisfaction affected their productivity, their commitment to the institution, their overall morale, and their workplace environment (Boamah et al., 2022; Zitko & Schultz, 2020). In addition to the lack of resources and services needed to be successful, adjunct faculty had no access to professional development opportunities that would have helped their teaching effectiveness (Febler, 2020).

**No Benefits.** Employing adjunct faculty members had its advantages with scheduling flexibility and a focus on student learning; however, staying in a part-time position meant no employer offered benefits for the faculty member (Butters & Gann, 2022; Hearn & Burns, 2021). In 2020, discussions of adjunct faculty members included the lack of benefits this part-time population often experienced, including health insurance that would have been otherwise available to them as employees (Alshehri, 2020; Zitko & Schultz, 2020). Through the following years, researchers expanded on the lack of health benefits that adjunct faculty members experienced but also shed light on

the lack of benefits in general, like job security that would have been expected from their organizational commitment, lower pay than full-time colleagues, and opportunities for professional growth (Berlin & Brock, 2021; Spinrad et al., 2022).

**Lower Pay.** As institutional funding decreased over the years, higher education institutions found a cost-effective way to fill needed course sections, with the employment of adjunct faculty members (Turner & Garvis, 2023). In 2020, researchers discussed the increased workload that adjunct faculty had in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the sudden shift to online offerings; however, the adjunct's pay did not increase and proved to be inadequate for the functions expected (Alshehri, 2020; Zitko & Schultz, 2020). Years following the urgent shift to online modalities, adjunct faculty members were still a cost-effective employment opportunity for online universities, as they received less than their full-time counterparts with the same overall teaching expectations as institutional faculty (Berlin & Brock, 2021; Butters & Gann, 2022; Spinrad et al., 2022; Swann et al., 2021).

**Participation in Institution.** Adjunct faculty often felt an amplified sense of isolation from an online higher education institution as part-time faculty when working in a remote location, and it was the responsibility of the institutional leaders to foster a connection (Matos & Kasztelnik, 2023). Throughout contemporary literature, researchers shed light on the importance of adjunct faculty members participating in the institution and presented examples for improvement (Bohonos & Sisco, 2021; Febler, 2020). Bohonos and Sisco reported that everyone in the institution should have had a chance to contribute, and Febler detailed ways the institution could have increased participation,

including increasing engagement opportunities like professional development and being a part of organizational work groups (Miller & Manata, 2023).

Conversely, contemporary literature showed evidence of no participation within the institution due to different obstacles (Alshehri, 2020). Adjunct faculty members followed institutional policies and practices that were counterproductive to their roles and goals (Alshehri, 2020). Additionally, department and institutional meetings often excluded part-time faculty, ending their potential impact on decision-making processes (Alshehri, 2020; Jung & Welch, 2022; Miller & Manata, 2023). Excluding adjunct faculty from different work groups that apply their expert knowledge, they started to face isolation or being outsiders to the institution (Jung & Welch, 2022; Skinner et al., 2023).

### ***Inclusion Experienced***

**Decrease Sense of Belonging.** The growth of online higher education had brought the need to find and hire high-quality adjunct faculty members who could support student learning (Stokes, 2021). However, contemporary literature discussed the challenge of including so many adjunct faculty when providing a sense of value and belonging to each faculty member (Cardon et al., 2023; Jung & Welch, 2022; Miller & Manata, 2023). The literature provided many reports of exclusion, or a decreased sense of belonging, as adjunct faculty members are often excluded from department and institutional meetings and had little to no contact with departmental faculty and staff (Alshehri, 2020; Berlin & Brock, 2021). Zitko and Schulz (2020) used the term segregated to describe the adjunct experience within the institution. Within teaching-only roles, the institution often excluded adjunct faculty from real-world application



opportunities, academic communities, and service-learning communities within the institution, and an overall sense of belonging within the community (Boamah et al., 2022; Sam et al., 2021; Zitko & Schultz, 2020). It was this disconnect that resulted in a feeling of isolation from the institution and its stakeholders, which was amplified in online adjunct faculty members due to their remote locations (Dennis et al., 2020; Febler, 2020; Parsons et al., 2022; Skinner et al., 2023; Zitko & Schultz, 2020). Within online universities, adjunct faculty members lacked contact and guidance, as seen in a lack of decision-making responsibilities and a lower perception of control (Butters & Gann, 2022; Gelman et al., 2022; Parsons et al., 2022).

**Lower Perception of Control.** According to Jung and Welch (2022), the perceived sense of inclusion included having access to information and resources, being involved in the work group, and having a voice in the decision-making processes. A correlation was seen between adjunct faculty with a lower perception of control and their exclusion from departmental or institutional meetings where decision-making occurred within online universities (Alshehri, 2020; Gelman et al., 2022). An example of this lower perception of control included adjunct faculty members not being included in the discussions of the courses they taught within the institution (Berlin & Brock, 2021). Febler (2020) found that as the perceived level of control increased, job strain decreased for faculty, regardless of job demands. With adjunct faculty institutional workplace inclusion, employee satisfaction increased, faculty feel empowered, and team commitment, task interdependence, and proactivity increased (Skinner et al., 2023). Jung

and Welch addressed the empowerment institutions could provide through fair and participative decision-making processes with adjunct faculty.

**Decreased Job Securities.** As online higher education continues to grow, institutions were expanding their course offerings using adjunct faculty, which allowed for increased flexibility (Butters & Gann, 2022). The flexibility discussed in contemporary literature referred to the term-by-term faculty assignments based on departmental needs and student enrollments (Berlin & Brock, 2021). Conducting course offerings in this manner was only possible due to the use of adjuncts; however, this type of employment need provided little if no job security for the faculty member, which were virtually expendable and overlooked (Boamah et al., 2022; Spinrad et al., 2022; Swann et al., 2021; Zitko & Schultz, 2020).

**Lower Levels of Engagement Within Institution.** When overlooked, adjunct faculty felt invisible to the institutional stakeholders (Sam et al., 2021). Parsons et al. (2022) described adjunct faculty in higher education as an indispensable but invisible group. Additionally, adjunct faculty members were not recognized for their contributions to the workgroup when involved in organizational activities (Sam et al., 2021). Febler (2020) and Swann et al. (2021) discussed that improved engagement occurs with opportunities within the department to use faculty expertise and insight. The lack of institutional engagement led to isolation and poor student outcomes (Butters & Gann, 2022). This isolation led to a sense of insignificance among online university adjunct faculty (Bohonos & Sisco, 2021; Zitko & Schultz, 2020).

### *Institutional Opportunities for Adjunct Faculty*

**Lower Faculty Satisfaction.** Many aspects affected adjunct faculty satisfaction, from the hiring process to the numerous demands expected of the role (Savchenko et al., 2022). According to Boamah et al. (2022), satisfaction depended on how the institutional stakeholders valued, respected and recognized the faculty. Detachment or isolation from the institution led to lower satisfaction and was connected to student outcomes (Butters & Gann, 2022; Febler, 2020; Skinner et al., 2023). Lower faculty satisfaction impacted productivity, institutional commitment, morale, and workplace culture (Boamah et al., 2022).

**Lower Growth Opportunities.** Online course offerings were mainstream in higher education, and adjunct faculty allowed the institutions to remain competitive while meeting societal demand; however, the institutions were not investing in adjunct faculty with growth opportunities (Cutri & Mena, 2020; Parsons et al., 2022). Adjunct faculty reported a lack of recognition for their work, their underutilization in the programs, and an overall lack of opportunities to advance professionally (Bohonos & Sisco, 2021; Sam et al., 2021; Swann et al., 2021). Even though there was interest, professional development opportunities for adjunct faculty members are limited, if not nonexistent (Berlin & Brock, 2021; Butters & Gann, 2022; Parsons et al., 2022). In addition to the institution not offering professional development opportunities to adjunct faculty, adjunct faculty were not supported in taking advantage of those that did arise (Butters & Gann, 2022; Febler, 2020). Over 2 years, a search of the literature found that institutions addressed the improvements needed to include professional development and research

opportunities for adjunct faculty because they provided the faculty member with not only exposure to new teaching techniques and technologies but also new teaching practices that are directly correlated to student outcomes (Butters & Gann, 2022; Febler, 2020). Lastly, Bohonos and Sisco noted that adjunct faculty should have had opportunities to contribute to the institution and the field to feel included.

### **Adjunct Faculty Burnout**

The next section of the literature review highlights research on burnout among adjunct faculty in online universities.

#### ***Known Causes of Adjunct Burnout***

**Chronic Stress.** Burnout was a modern concern among faculty members due to the need to learn the latest information and technology and teach others (Russell et al., 2020; Savchenko et al., 2022; Turner & Garvis, 2023). Burnout resulted from unmanaged chronic stress (Mueller & Morley, 2020; Russell et al., 2020). Contemporary literature discussed workplace stress as the recurring presence of stress factors in an individual's workplace, which can lead to burnout (Boamah et al., 2022; Mueller & Morley, 2020). More recent literature reported higher levels of stress among faculty members, resulting in psychological, physical, and emotional withdrawal (Savchenko et al., 2022; Turner & Garvis, 2023).

**Demands of Adjunct Position.** If not successfully managed, one attribute of the adjunct faculty role that led to increased stress and burnout was the increasing demands of the role in higher education institutions (Turner & Garvis, 2023). One factor that all contemporary literature agreed with was the link between burnout among faculty

members and the excessive workload associated with the role (Boamah et al., 2022; Kolomitro et al., 2020; Russell et al., 2020; Savchenko et al., 2022; Turner & Garvis, 2023). Interestingly, Russell et al. (2020) mentioned long working hours and overcommunication as contributors to burnout; however, that depended on the number of courses taught and at how many different institutions. Adjunct faculty members often had little to no control over their teaching roles, and they had to meet the high expectations set by the institution to remain competitive along with processing and teaching substantial amounts of information over different platforms (Boamah et al., 2022; Kolomitro et al., 2020; Savchenko et al., 2022). Most recently, Turner and Garvis (2023) reported work intensification as the institution and its stakeholders adapted to a performance-based culture, including pressure for profitability and faculty members to publish research.

**Adjunct Role Attributes.** Deeply rooted in the work environment, adjunct faculty faced potential burnout from the demanding expectations of the role within higher education (Boamah et al., 2022). The research discovered a relationship between a lack of a strong or good leader and increased burnout for adjunct faculty members (Boamah et al., 2022; Savchenko et al., 2022). Also, Mueller and Morley (2020) discussed that a lack of understanding of the job expectations and responsibilities could have led to burnout for the employee; however, the researchers also stated that it is the employee's responsibility to fully understand the role, which depended on the institution's onboard activities. As previously discussed, adjunct faculty members were subject to job insecurities due to the part-time nature of the position; however, that could have been a form of chronic stress

for the individual that contributed to burnout (Kolomitro et al., 2020; Turner & Garvis, 2023). Additionally, the lack of resources and achievements that adjunct faculty members experienced in their role could have been a form of stress that led to the faculty member experiencing burnout (Boamah et al., 2022; Cece et al., 2022).

### ***Known Effects of Adjunct Burnout***

**Lower Levels of Well-Being.** Throughout the contemporary literature, it was reported that as stress levels mounted for adjunct faculty members and characteristics of burnout presented, the individual's well-being was affected (Savchenko et al., 2022; Turner & Garvis, 2023). Burnout presented in a depletion of physical (fatigue), psychological (irritation), and emotional exhaustion (lack of interest) for the individual (Agarwal & Bansal, 2021; Boamah et al., 2022; Kolomitro et al., 2020; Mueller & Morley, 2020; Russell et al., 2020; Savchenko et al., 2022). An individual experiencing burnout could have also displayed cynicism or sarcasm and a lower professional efficacy when faced with more workplace stress (Boamah et al., 2022; Russell et al., 2020). Savchenko et al. discussed ways to support strong well-being to aid in combating burnout, which included having high personal self-efficacy, participating in regular physical exercise, and dedicating enough time for personal rest.

**Lower Job Satisfaction and Productivity.** Burnout could have caused dissatisfaction in an individual's employment role and responsibilities (Kolomitro et al., 2020; Savchenko et al., 2022). As the individual's burnout symptoms and dissatisfaction increased, they were likelier to be irritable and experience absenteeism (Boamah et al., 2022; Mueller & Morley, 2020). Other effects of burnout among faculty members

included low engagement and productivity when they were attempting to complete their work, lack of motivation, chronic indecision, and a deterioration in the quality of their teaching skills (Boamah et al., 2022; Kolomitro et al., 2020; Russell et al., 2020; Savchenko et al., 2022). Most importantly, the effects of burnout decreased job satisfaction and work ethics and were the most common reasons why higher education faculty leave their positions (Mueller & Morley, 2020; Russell et al., 2020).

**Lack of Inclusion and Work-Family Conflicts.** One responsibility of online universities was to provide an inclusionary environment for adjunct faculty members; however, when that was not present, it could have exacerbated burnout symptoms, leading to work-family conflicts (Skinner et al., 2023). The exclusion of adjunct faculty members could have started with the detachment or withdrawal of the individual's institutional efforts because they had become emotionally and psychologically distant from their work (Boamah et al., 2022; Russell et al., 2020). Due to the common overlap, adjunct faculty members experienced in remote positions, personal and professional roles started to blur; therefore, as the work demands increased and burnout was present, the personal roles of the individual experienced the symptoms of burnout (Savchenko et al., 2022; Turner & Garvis, 2023).

### **Moderating Variables**

The next section of the literature review highlights research focuses on the moderating variables chosen for this study, including the adjunct faculty's age, gender, and the number of years of teaching experience as an online adjunct faculty.

Online universities used faculty in adjunct roles to meet institutional needs while presenting a diverse population of faculty to the students, including differences in age, gender, and the number of years of experience the faculty member has with teaching at online universities (Shulman, 2019). One example is Reeder's (2020) study into the factors that led to adjunct faculty remaining committed to an institution. While investigating factors linked to faculty's job satisfaction, Reeder discovered that job satisfaction among adjunct faculty was higher in individuals aged 50 or older. Reeder used an electronic survey to study 214 adjunct faculty members, 65% of whom were female. The survey included questions from the investment model scale, the short grit scale, and the new general self-efficacy scale, which utilized a 5-point likert scale to collect data (Reeder, 2020). Although Reeder discussed how influential job satisfaction was to an adjunct faculty member's commitment to their institution and how administrators could have used this data on future changes, Reeder did not discuss how the faculty's demographic information may have impacted the results. Within the background section of the study, Reeder discussed that more satisfied adjunct faculty members were older than unsatisfied. However, Reeder did not discuss whether age correlated to satisfaction among the 214 responses collected. Reeder also mentioned that 65% of the participants were female; however, Reeder did not discuss the potential for different results if a future study consisted of male participants.

Adding to the literature, Kolomitro et al. (2020) studied the factors that impacted the well-being of university faculty and administrators. Kolomitro et al. deployed an electronic survey with open-ended psychological and workplace well-being questions.



The study included 210 participants; 78% identified as female, and 31% indicated they had 5–10 years of experience (Kolomitro et al., 2020). Upon analysis of the survey submissions, Kolomitro et al. discovered four factors that affected the participant's well-being: colleagues, leadership, administration, and workplace. Within all four factors, researchers discovered that positive and supportive actions led to higher individual well-being; conversely, negative or unproductive actions negatively impacted the individual's well-being (Kolomitro et al., 2020). Similarly to Reeder (2020), the participants' demographic information was discussed in terms of the study, and background information was supplied, which stated this line of work was a female occupation; however, any potential impact was not discussed in the results by Kolomitro et al.

Berlin and Brock (2021) conducted a study among adjunct and core (full-time) faculty members to examine the current teaching environment and how it may have affected student learning outcomes. The study focused on the variables including job satisfaction, resource availability, and department interaction (Berlin & Brock, 2021). Berlin and Brock used a mixed-method approach by sending a survey to collect volunteer information, followed by an interview with the 12 qualified applicants. Of the 12 confirmed participants, six were adjunct faculty members, 10 were female, and a mean age of 44 (Berlin & Brock, 2021). Researchers reported that teaching experience ranged from 2 to 30 years (Berlin & Brock, 2021). While the researchers discussed how each population, adjunct or core, was impacted by current working conditions, there was no discussion of how demographic information among the participants could have been impacted.

Expanding on the literature, Cramer and Polanska (2021) used online surveys to examine why adjunct and core (full-time) faculty, particularly females, chose to start and continue teaching at online universities. Cramer and Polanska used emails, social media, and Facebook to recruit volunteers. Cramer and Polanska discussed the flexibility of online courses and the possibility of gender playing a crucial part in the decision to teach online. Cramer and Polanska discussed how females represented the majority of online university faculty; however, female faculty were not the predominant gender in long-term academic careers due to conflicting personal responsibilities like starting a family. The researchers emailed and posted an electronic survey on social media, resulting in 153 participants (Cramer & Polanska, 2021). The 153 participants confirmed having online university teaching experience; 75.8% were females, and their ages ranged from 30 to 56 years (Cramer & Polanska, 2021). Cramer and Polanska focused on whether caregiver responsibilities were present in the lives of the participants, along with personal priorities like health, disability, and race/ethnicity, and if they impacted their choice to teach at online universities. The study concluded that flexibility in geographic location and caregiving for children were the main reasons for starting and staying at online universities (Cramer & Polanska, 2021). The flexibility of online teaching reduced the cost of outside childcare for females with the biological and gendered expectations to have and raise children (Cramer & Polanska, 2021). While Cramer and Polanska discussed why female adjuncts and core faculty might have chosen to teach at online universities, they did not explain how the results pertain to male age differences.

Burleigh et al. (2021) studied the expectations and experiences of adjunct faculty at online universities with professional development opportunities. From an invitation letter sent out to prospective volunteers, 18 participants were included in the study (Burleigh et al., 2021). The researchers selected participants with the required minimum of 5 years of online teaching experience for the study (Burleigh et al., 2021). Interviews with open-ended questions were used to collect data, including an average of 12 years of online teaching experience, 10 females and 8 males, and ages that ranged from 30 to 78 (Burleigh et al., 2021). While Burleigh et al. required a minimum of 5 years of online teaching experience, they did not discuss how that may have impacted the study results. Researchers collected demographic information but did not discuss trends or noteworthy analysis points. Researchers discussed one future research proposal, noting that a study should be conducted to examine the satisfaction of professional development opportunities among veteran online adjunct faculty (who have more online teaching experience). This current study contributes to the literature by examining how differing years of online teaching experience may affect the results of a study.

Swann et al. (2021) conducted a study on the use of adjunct faculty alongside core faculty (full-time) in educational leadership programs. The researchers addressed the growing challenges that adjunct faculty faced in higher education institutions, including an increasing number of courses taught each term, a lack of support, and a lack of investment from the institution in the adjunct faculty member (Swann et al., 2021). Twenty-seven adjunct faculty members from one institution were used in the study, including 11 females and 16 males (Swann et al., 2021). Swann et al. discovered from

their 27 interviews that both faculty types, adjunct or core, were supported and included in assorted opportunities that built an effective and efficient educational leadership program; however, the distinction of gender differences was not discussed in the study.

The work of Savchenko et al. (2022) brought new insight into burnout among online university faculty members and how to correct and prevent burnout syndrome. Through the literature review of Savchenko et al., multiple pieces of evidence were presented to the undesirable working conditions that university faculty members experienced when teaching online, such as the need to master new learning tools and technologies, extreme work demands, and technological overload, all of which were factors that led to burnout. The study by Savchenko et al. deployed a questionnaire to 30 online university faculty, which included 96.7% of female participants with work experience ranging over 30 years (Savchenko et al., 2022). The researchers discovered that an individual's values (i.e., an interesting job, freedom, and cleanliness) impacted how burnout syndrome was formed, and it was the focus on or expansion of those personal values that can help prevent burnout in the future (see Savchenko et al., 2022); however, the differences in gender and teaching experience were not discussed as possible factors. As Savchenko et al. discussed in their analysis, personal values correlated to burnout syndrome; however, they did not discuss how an individual's gender roles and overall experience may have affected the results.

The contemporary literature contained examples of collecting the age, gender, and years of teaching experience at online universities; however, none included how those demographic differences may have impacted the study results. The use of adjunct faculty

members in online universities has grown and continued to reduce costs and provided scheduling flexibility (Alshehri, 2020; Cutri & Mena, 2020; Turner & Garvis, 2023). Skinner et al. (2023) discussed adjunct faculty's benefits to the online university, including their real-world expertise from actively working in the field. The combination of increased use of adjunct faculty in online universities and the unique benefits they brought with them influenced the choice of this study to explore the faculty's age, gender, and number of years teaching at an online university. The literature provided evidence of the applicable use of these variables; however, the researchers did not discuss trends, impacts, or the value of collecting these data points. This study will directly analyze the faculty's age, gender, and number of years teaching at an online university as potential moderating variables in the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty, as seen in the study's research question.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

In Chapter 2, I summarized and discussed the contemporary literature on adjunct faculty in online universities, workplace inclusion of adjunct faculty in online universities, and burnout among adjunct faculty members. One central theme I found in the literature was online universities' almost complete dependence on adjunct faculty members. For example, many universities' approximate use of adjunct faculty members is two thirds of the faculty population, making adjunct employment the primary workforce within the institution (Alshehri, 2020; Reeder, 2020; Sam et al., 2021; Swann et al., 2021). This literature review also revealed the amount of underappreciation that adjunct faculty experienced and their associated workload for the role. The reviewed

studies showed a clear snapshot of the adjunct faculty position and requirements within online universities while linking that to the lack of workplace inclusion and burnout symptoms. Despite the literature exploring methods to improve workplace inclusion and combat burnout among adjunct faculty members, a clear gap remains about the possible link workplace inclusion has on the presence of burnout. To fill the gap in the literature, I will use a quantitative research design to assess the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by instructor age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as an adjunct. The research methodology will be discussed in Chapter 3.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by instructor age, gender, and the number of years teaching as an adjunct faculty member. In this chapter, I describe the research design and rationale for its use in the study. The sample, sampling procedures, and data sources are also discussed. Additionally, I define the constructs and variables of interest as well as explain the data analysis plan, validity, and ethical considerations for this study. The RQs and associated hypotheses for this study were:

RQ1: What is the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities?

$H_01$ : There is no relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

$H_a1$ : There is a relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

RQ2: Are instructor age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as an adjunct moderators of the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities?

$H_02$ : Instructor age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as an adjunct are not moderators of the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

*H<sub>a2</sub>*: Instructor age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as an adjunct are moderators of the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

In this study, I used a quantitative nonexperimental correlational design to investigate the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by instructor age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as an adjunct. I selected a quantitative approach because it is appropriate when studying a relationship between two or more variables, as was the focus of the current study (see Burkholder et al., 2019). I chose a nonexperimental design because the variables require no manipulation (see Burkholder et al., 2019). A correlational design was also chosen because I aimed to understand the nature of the relationship between naturally occurring variables in this study (see Burkholder et al., 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

In this study, I used a nonexperimental correlational design, which had a limitation of difficulty inferring causation (see Burkholder et al., 2019). Additional limitations of this study include the participation pool and the known influence the participants experienced in their lives unassociated with their online adjunct faculty position; self-reported data that may have been skewed; and the use of a likert scale, which may have caused pressure to report a socially desirable response. Because I collected data regarding experiences using an online survey, no time or resource constraints were applied. Considering these limitations, this design choice was consistent



with the research designs needed to advance knowledge about higher education faculty. For instance, using a nonexperimental correlational study, Tatar et al. (2015) studied the relationship between preservice teachers' perceptions of using technology in mathematics teaching, their computer literacy levels, and their mathematics teaching anxiety. The researchers found that as the teachers' perceived use of technology and computer literacy levels increase, their mathematics teaching anxiety decreases. In another study, Benton (2021) studied the relationship between nursing faculty age, educational level, specialty, years of work, and years of teaching in nursing using a nonexperimental correlational study. The researcher found that the faculty with a women's health specialty; a doctorate; and increased years of age, nursing practice, and teaching all presented with lowered barriers to addressing sexual health in the classroom. These findings from Tatar et al. and Benton proved that a quantitative correlational study design could be used to advance knowledge about higher education adjunct faculty. A nonexperimental correlational design is also appropriate when a naturally occurring relationship is being studied (Burkholder et al., 2019). While correlational designs do not allow for causation inference, the nonexperimental and quantitative nature of the study allowed for many participants to be analyzed quickly and efficiently (see Burkholder et al., 2019).

### **Methodology**

In this section, I describe the population, related sampling procedures, and the treatment of the collected data. This section also contains a discussion of the instruments used to collect the data, including the operationalization of constructs, variable measurement, and the calculation and representation of the responses. Additionally, a

detailed data analysis plan, specific statistical tests, assumptions, threats to validity, and ethical procedures are provided in this section.

### **Population and Sampling**

I selected the study's participants based on their self-reports of having experience as an online adjunct faculty member. I collected the data using a Qualtrics survey. The collected data were housed and protected following the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) requirements. To qualify for the study, participants had to be online adjunct faculty members who agreed to the consent form. Participants could have taught any degree level and content area within an online university with any class size. I determined the target population size for this study by using G\*Power software (see Faul et al., 2009). I chose *F*-tests for the test family, Linear Regression,  $R^2$  Deviation from Zero for the statistical test, and a priori power analysis. I selected a medium effect size of  $f^2 = 0.15$ , an alpha level of  $\alpha$  err prob = 0.05, a power ( $1 - \beta$  err prob) = 0.80, and seven predictors (see Cohen, 1992; Faul et al., 2009). The number of predictors included the independent variable, each moderating variable, and each interaction variable (i.e., one independent variable, three moderating variables, and three interaction variables). These values resulted in a minimum sample size calculation of 103 participants.

After I contacted the Walden University IRB, I contacted numerous online university faculty members. In order to protect the study's participants, the institutional names have not been included. However, since all contact information was collected from public domain or through approvals, it did not require additional approval. I also used social media, such as Facebook, X, and Instagram, to obtain volunteers.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

Upon approval from the Walden University IRB, I recruited participants through an online survey using Facebook, Instagram, and X accounts. The participants were also asked to share the survey with others for completion. I sent an email to online adjunct faculty via their institutional email. Volunteers were also provided with a consent statement, followed by a link to the survey.

I gave interested participants the survey to complete anonymously through a Qualtrics survey link. The survey included demographic information (i.e., their age, gender, and years of teaching online) and questions about workplace inclusion and burnout. A feature of Qualtrics includes exporting the collected data to a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) file for proper storage. Upon completing the survey, the participants submitted their responses and received a thank you message. I did not require the participants to follow up on the survey.

### **Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs**

I used two instruments in this study: the Burnout Inventory by Iverson et al. (1998) and the Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale by Roberson (2006; see Appendices A and B, respectively). Researchers receive permission to use the Burnout Inventory for educational purposes within the PsycTESTS posting. Iverson et al. designed the Burnout Inventory to measure employees' perceptions of burnout using three constructs: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and personal accomplishment. In this study, the adjunct faculty served as the employees measured for their perceptions of burnout. Each construct of the Burnout Inventory measured the participant's responses

based on a 5-point likert-type scale format with choices from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. The first three questions on the Burnout Inventory measured the first construct of emotional exhaustion, the second set of questions measured the second construct of depersonalization, and the final set of questions measured the third construct of personal accomplishment.

Researchers receive permission to use the Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale for educational purposes within the PsycTESTS posting for the scale. Roberson (2006) designed the Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale to measure employees' perceptions of inclusion within their workplace using two constructs: diversity and inclusion. In this study, the adjunct faculty served as the employees measured for their perceptions of workplace inclusion. Each construct of the Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale measured the participant's responses based on a 9-point likert-type scale format with choices from *not at all* to *completely*. The questions marked with a "D" on the Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale assessed the first construct of diversity, while the questions marked with an "I" on the Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale assessed the second construct of inclusion. I only used questions marked with an "I" in the current study.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

I analyzed the collected data using the SPSS, Version 28. Analysis of the surveys housed in Qualtrics required a response to all questions; however, I recorded partial data. If participants ended the survey without completing the entirety, they were excluded from the analysis. The survey remained open to allow for 30% more responses than what was

recommended by the G\*Power calculation to account for any incomplete data. Because the participant's identity remained anonymous, I used data cleaning to address outliers and incomplete submissions.

The analysis plan for this study included a linear regression moderation. I also used dummy variables to account for the statistical significance of the interactions between the independent variable and each moderating variable. Multiple statistical tests were needed to examine each moderating variable's relationship to the independent and dependent variables. I performed each statistical analysis separately to ensure accurate analyses and findings. No covariate or confounding variables were used in this study. I used the  $p$  value to determine statistical significance and  $r^2$  values to determine the variability observed in the dependent variable.

### **Assumptions**

Using linear regression allowed me to examine the relationship between one dependent variable and one independent variable (see Warner, 2012); however, Laerd Statistics (2018) required different assumptions for the results produced to be considered valid. Laird Statistics stated that there is often a solution when using real-world data to overcome the seven assumption violations. The first two assumptions of linear regression are measured on a continuous scale using a dependent and an independent variable (Laerd Statistics, 2018). The current study design met this assumption.

### **Nature of Data**

Once the data became available, I assessed the remaining assumptions. The third assumption requires the two variables to have a linear relationship (Laerd Statistics,

2018). I examined the relationship by running a scatterplot. If the relationship is not linear, Laerd Statistics (2018) recommended another regression analysis or transforming the data to comply with a linear regression.

The fourth assumption states that the data should have independence of observations, meaning that any observed error must be independent of the remaining data (Laerd Statistics, 2018). Dependent errors are referred to as correlated, which can lead to a study design issue (Laerd Statistics, 2018). The independence of observations is examined using the Durbin-Watson value in the Model Summary output.

According to Laerd Statistics (2018), researchers could not observe significant outliers among the dependent data per the fifth assumption of linear regression. The presence of an outlier in this data can reduce the predictive accuracy of the results, but it should be easily detected. Laerd Statistics recommended using a casewise diagnostics table to detect outliers. Upon discovering one or more outliers, a researcher must analyze each outlier for validity (Laerd Statistics, 2018). The analysis of an outlier should include a review of the data point to ensure it is accurate data or if there is an error in the measurement or the product of an adjacent process. Outliers are always kept in the study and analyzed when confirmed as actual data; however, if the researcher confirms that the data point is an error, the researcher will remove the outlier. Regardless of the use or removal of the outlier, the researcher needs to include a detailed explanation in the study.

Laerd Statistics (2018) recommended homoscedasticity, which is defined as all errors of the independent variable being equal in variance (i.e., equally scattered), for the sixth assumption to be met for valid results. If the scatterplot shows unequal errors,

heteroscedasticity is present, and a different regression analysis is required (Laerd Statistics, 2018).

The final assumption of linear regression is to check that the errors of the regression line are normally distributed (Laerd Statistics, 2018). A histogram is used to examine whether the errors of the regression line were normally distributed (Laerd Statistics, 2018). If the scatterplot shows an abnormal distribution, the transform of the dependent variable is the first option to coax the error into normality; however, this transformation may also require the independent variable to regain linearity (Laerd Statistics, 2018).

### **Threats to Validity**

External validity refers to how well the study's results can be generalized and applied to a larger population (Hassan, 2023a). If most participants were from the same online university, the current study's lack of diverse participant characteristics may have threatened the external validity. I addressed this threat by promoting participation in various communication platforms and emails.

Internal validity refers to the accuracy of the study's components and results (Hassan, 2023c). One threat to this study's internal validity was extraneous variables, which I minimized as much as possible with straightforward survey questions. A second threat to the internal validity of this study was researcher bias. I confirmed that no assumptions were portrayed in the survey questions that may have influenced the participant's response by using predetermined survey questions.

A threat to the study's constructs included unclear terminology used in the survey. An example of this threat was the term adjunct, which may have a different meaning from institution to institution. I addressed this threat by clearly defining terms for this study. A threat to the study's statistical conclusions included not checking the assumptions accompanying statistical methods. I had all conclusions verified by a subject matter expert. Also, the use of an analytical method that was inappropriate for the variables and research questions would have threatened the statistical conclusions.

### **Ethical Procedures**

The first ethical procedure I was concerned with was requesting participants from my place of work to volunteer for the study. First, I sought IRB approval from Walden University and the approval was granted (approval number: 06-07-24-0651049) which stated that department leadership must approve the outreach. Once approved, I used the faculty's institutional email addresses for volunteers. Professionalism was maintained throughout the recruitment phase, and all addresses were respected and not used unprofessionally to gain more recruits.

The second ethical procedure was related to protecting the study's data. I used the Qualtrics survey, which allowed for anonymous submissions and protected the participant from fear of repercussions. I stored the data from the survey on my laptop, which was password protected and located in my locked home. I limited this information to myself and my dissertation committee members at Walden University.

A third ethical procedure was related to informed consent. All participants received an Informed Consent Statement at the start of the survey. The use of an



informed consent statement allowed the prospective participant to understand the details of the survey fully so they could decide if they wanted to participate or not before they started (Hassan, 2023b). The participants received the consent statement prior to starting the survey.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I discussed the research study design and methodology for this study. I used a quantitative nonexperimental correlational design to investigate the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by instructor age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as an adjunct. I collected the data for this study using a Qualtrics survey, the Burnout Inventory by Iverson et al. (1998), and the Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale by Roberson (2006). I analyzed the data once collected using SPSS, using a linear regression analysis with moderation. I also discussed the threats to validity and ethical considerations. In Chapter 4, I will detail the study findings.

## Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by instructor age, gender, and the number of years teaching as an adjunct faculty member. To conduct this study, I used an electronic survey to collect data from faculty members with experience teaching in an online university setting as adjunct faculty members. I collected demographic information, including the faculty's age, gender, and number of years teaching as an adjunct, along with answers to burnout and workplace inclusion questions. The following research questions and associated hypotheses were developed to address the study's problem:

RQ1: What is the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities?

*H*<sub>0</sub>1: There is no relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

*H*<sub>a</sub>1: There is a relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

RQ2: Are instructor age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as an adjunct moderators of the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities?

*H*<sub>0</sub>2: Instructor age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as an adjunct are not moderators of the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

*H<sub>a2</sub>*: Instructor age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as an adjunct are moderators of the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

Chapter 4 is organized into three main sections: Data Collection, in which I detail how the data were collected and describe the sample; Results, in which I detail the descriptive statistics of the sample; and Analytical Findings. I conclude Chapter 4 with a summary.

### **Data Collection**

This study included the use of an electronic survey to collect data from online university faculty members with experience teaching as adjunct faculty members. I received Walden University IRB approval on June 7, 2024, for anonymous data collection and analysis. I collected data from June 8, 2024, through August 25, 2024. I recruited participants via personal connections, public information, and social media. I used personal connections with known adjunct faculty members to collect willing participants. Different universities' public information was used to contact faculty members and request their participation. Additionally, I used social media platforms to recruit participants, such as Facebook, Instagram, and X. Since I made recruitment efforts on social media platforms, response rates were not known. There were no noted discrepancies in the data collection process. There were 43 incomplete responses recorded within the data set. Among the 104 complete responses, 76 participants identified as female and 28 identified as male. The age of participants is displayed in Table 1 and the faculty's adjunct teaching experience is provided in Table 2.

**Table 1***Faculty Age Demographics*

Number of faculty	Age group (years)
16	< 40
25	40–49
30	50–59
25	60–69
8	≥ 70

**Table 2***Faculty Adjunct Teaching Experience Demographics*

Number of faculty	Experience group (years)
54	< 10
39	10–19
6	20–29
5	> 30

The median age of the sample population was 52 years, representing the demographic characteristics of part-time faculty in degree-granting postsecondary institutions of 45 to 54 years (see National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). In the next section, I describe the data analysis process in alignment with this study's RQs and hypotheses.

## Results

I used a linear regression analysis with moderation to assess if there was a relationship between the independent (i.e., workplace inclusion), dependent variable (i.e., burnout), and moderating variables (i.e., faculty age, gender, and number of years of experience teaching at online universities). To analyze the collected data, I combined the variables that pertained to the independent variable of workplace inclusion, into an overall variable (i.e., Workplaceinclusion\_Total) along with a similar overall variable for

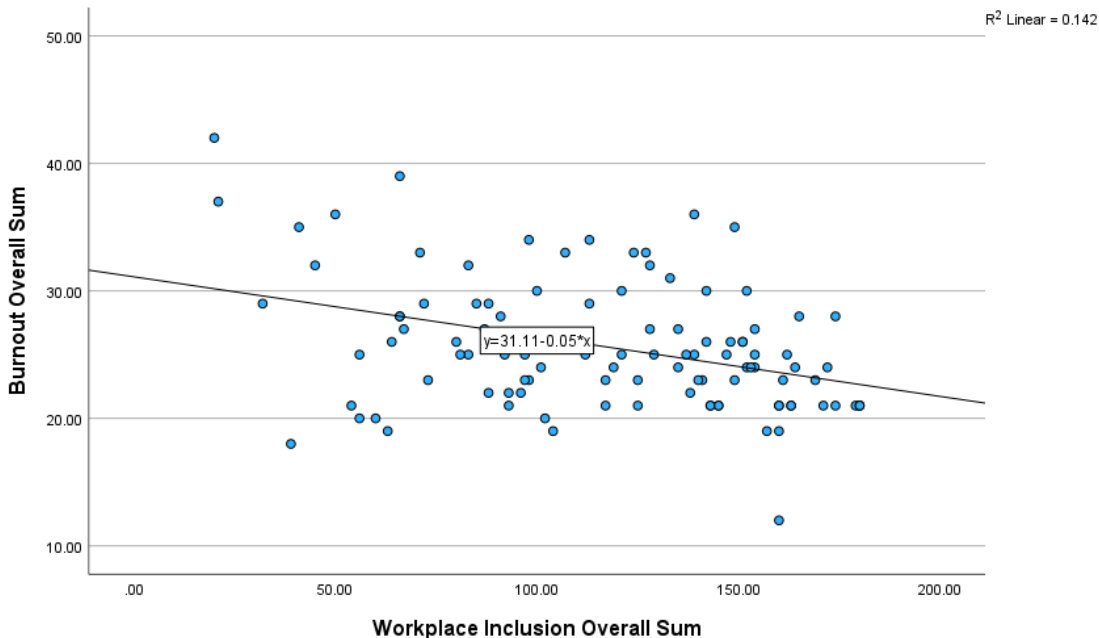
the items about the dependent variable of burnout (i.e., Burnout\_Total). In addition to these overall variables, I created interaction variables to study the possible moderating effect of each moderating variable on the independent variable of workplace inclusion (i.e., AgeXWI\_Sum, GenderXWI\_Sum, and YrsXWI\_Sum). Workplace inclusion was a continuous variable with a scale measurement represented by varying levels of agreement or disagreement, and burnout was also a continuous variable represented by varying levels of agreement or disagreement. Prior to running the linear regression test, I ensured the assumptions of the test were met to offer support that the findings were valid.

### **Assumptions**

The collected data confirmed two of the seven assumptions for a linear regression analysis using one independent variable, dependent variable, and moderating variables (see Laerd Statistics, 2018). As seen in Figure 1, the third assumption of linear regression requires that the independent and dependent variables have a linear relationship (see Laerd Statistics, 2018).

**Figure 1**

*Scatterplot of Linear Relationship of Variables*



The fourth assumption is that the data should have independence of observations, meaning that any observed error must be independent of the remaining data, and an acceptable range is 1.50 – 2.50 (see Laerd Statistics, 2018). I examined the independence of observations using the Durbin-Watson value in the Model Summary output, as seen in Table 3. With a value of 2.112, this study’s data was acceptable for observed error.

**Table 3**

*Durbin-Watson Value of Independence of Observations*

Model <sup>b</sup>	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.377 <sup>a</sup>	.142	.133	4.76173	2.112

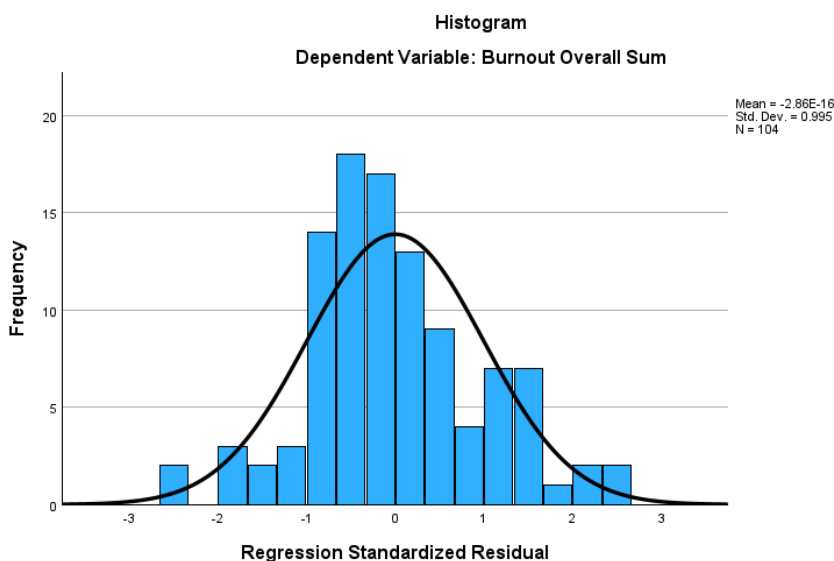
<sup>a</sup>. Predictors: (Constant), Workplace inclusion overall sum.

<sup>b</sup>. Dependent variable: Burnout overall sum.

The fifth assumption of linear regression states that I could not observe any significant outliers among the dependent variable data (see Laerd Statistics, 2018). Figure 2 is a histogram of the dependent variable of burnout, which shows slightly more data points around the -0.5 point; however, the P-P plot displayed in Figure 3 is more reassuring because there does not seem to be a significant deviation from the cumulative probabilities of 0.4 and 0.6.

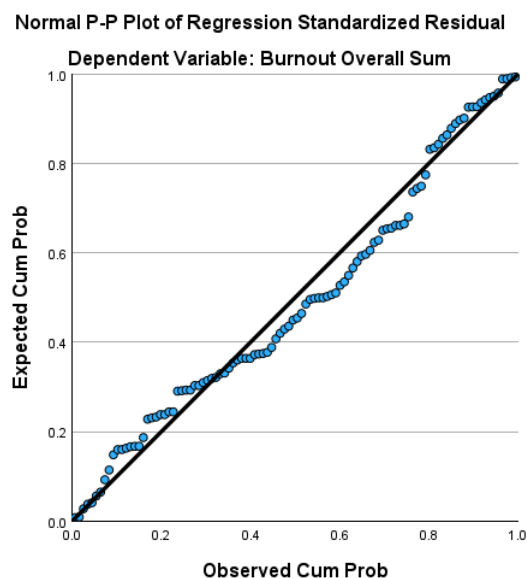
### Figure 2

*Histogram of the Dependent Variable: Burnout*



**Figure 3**

*P-P Plot of the Dependent Variable: Burnout*

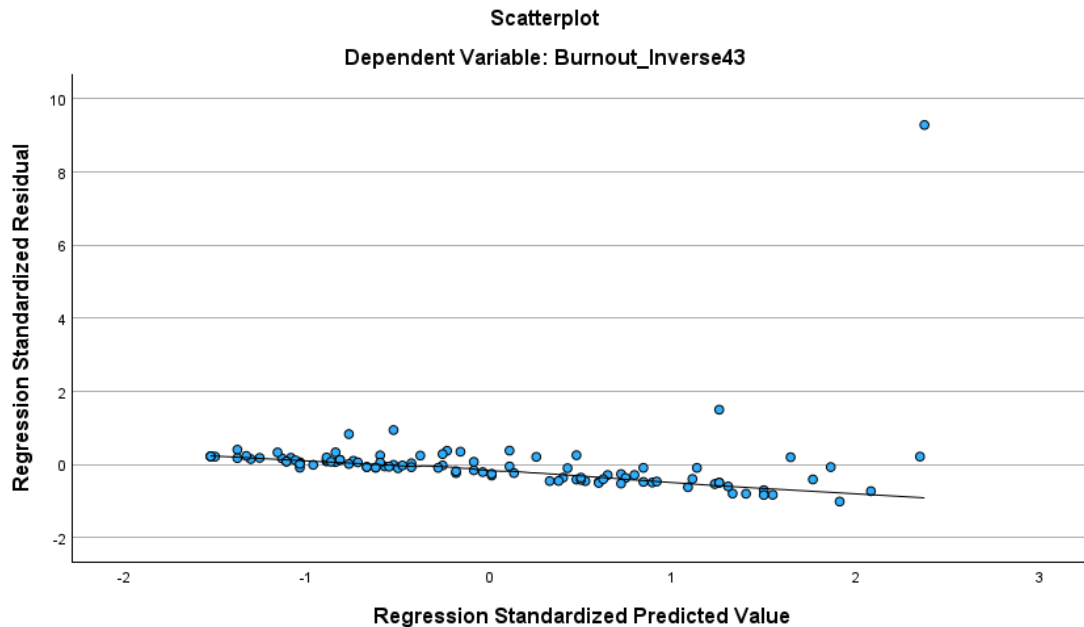


The sixth assumption, homoscedasticity, meaning all errors of the independent variable are equal in variance (i.e., equally scattered), must be met for valid results (see Laerd Statistics, 2018). The raw data did not meet this assumption, and I transformed the data to account for the incredibly negatively skewed data by computing the variable with the numeric expression ( $= 1/(43-DV)$ ; see Laerd Statistics, 2018). The value of 43 came from accounting for the most significant score in the data set for the dependent variable and adding one to its value (see Laerd Statistics, 2018). As verified in Figure 4, these transformed data are termed `Burnout_Inverse43` in the SPSS data and met the seventh assumption. As seen and confirmed in the histogram in Figure 2, the final assumption of linear regression was to check that the errors of the regression line are normally distributed (see Laerd Statistics, 2018).



**Figure 4**

*Scatterplot of the Homoscedasticity of the Dependent Variable: Burnout*



## Analytical Findings

### *Research Question 1*

I performed a linear regression to analyze the study's moderating variables. First, I conducted a linear regression in SPSS with the dependent variable of Burnout\_Overall\_Sum, the independent variable of Workplace\_Inclusion\_Overall\_Sum, and a 95% confidence interval. Workplace inclusion is explained in Table 3, which shows an  $R^2$  value = .142, which means there is a 14.2% proportion of variation in burnout. Additionally, Table 3 shows the adjusted  $R^2$  value as .133, which is the effect size of 13.3%. In Table 4, I used a standard threshold for statistical significance at  $p < .05$ .

**Table 4***ANOVA of Linear Regression: BO and WI*

Model <sup>a,b</sup>	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.
Regression	57,650.385	1	57,765.385	450.475	< .001 <sup>c</sup>
Residual	13,181.615	103	127.977		
Total	70,832.000 <sup>d</sup>	104			

<sup>a.</sup> Dependent variable: Burnout overall sum.

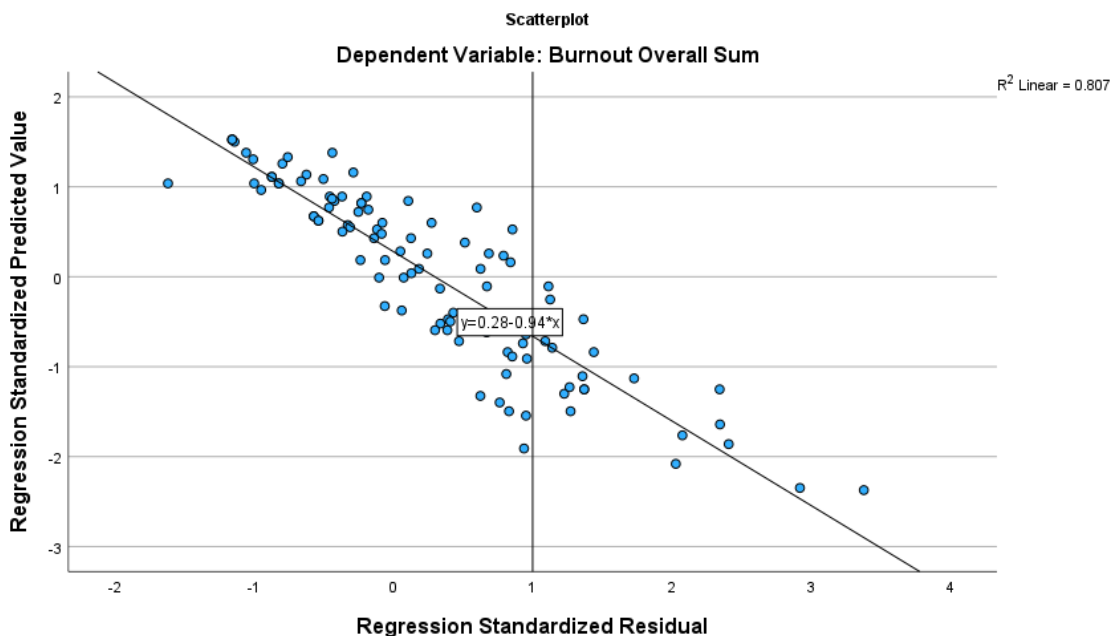
<sup>b.</sup> Linear regression through the origin.

<sup>c.</sup> Predictors: Workplace inclusion overall sum.

<sup>d.</sup> This sum of squares is not corrected for the constant because the constant is zero for regression through the origin.

This linear regression model is statistically significant because  $p < .001$ , as seen in Table 4, is less than the threshold ( $p < .05$ ), signaling its statistical significance. This statistical significance indicates a significant relationship between workplace inclusion and burnout amongst adjunct faculty at online universities. A statistically significant result proves that the studied relationship did not occur by chance. Figure 5 shows the inverse relationship between the independent variable of workplace inclusion and the dependent variable of burnout. The data showed this inverse relationship to be equivalent to -0.94, which means that as workplace inclusion increases, burnout decreases by 0.94.

Figure 5

*Inverse Relationship Between Burnout and Workplace Inclusion***Research Question 2**

I created interaction variables for each moderating variable, instructor age, instructor gender, and the number of years of teaching experience as an adjunct: AgeXWI\_Sum, GenderXWI\_Sum, and YrsXWI\_Sum. In each regression analysis, the dependent variable of Burnout\_Overall\_Sum, the independent variable of Workplace\_Overall\_Sum, and the corresponding moderating variable (i.e., age, gender, or yrs) was conducted with a 95% confidence interval.

**Instructor Age.** As seen in Table 5, I used a standard threshold for statistical significance at  $p < .05$ . The  $p$  value = .034, indicating a statistically significant relationship between the faculty's age and workplace inclusion. Table 5 also shows the

predictor of age explained by an  $R^2$  value = .513 or 51.3% innovation variance. Figure 6 shows a positive slope equal to 1, meaning that there is a statistically significant relationship between the faculty's age and burnout, and as the instructor's age increases each year with workplace inclusion efforts, so does burnout among the faculty. I determined the faculty's age to moderate the linear regression relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

**Table 5**

*Model Summary of Linear Regressions: Age and WI & AgeXWI and WI*

Model <sup>c</sup>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> Square	Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change statistics				
					<i>R</i> Square Change	<i>F</i> Change	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	Sig. <i>F</i> Change
1	.478 <sup>a</sup>	.229	.213	4.53673	.229	14.971	2	101	< .001
2	.513 <sup>b</sup>	.263	.241	4.45699	.034	4.647	1	100	.034

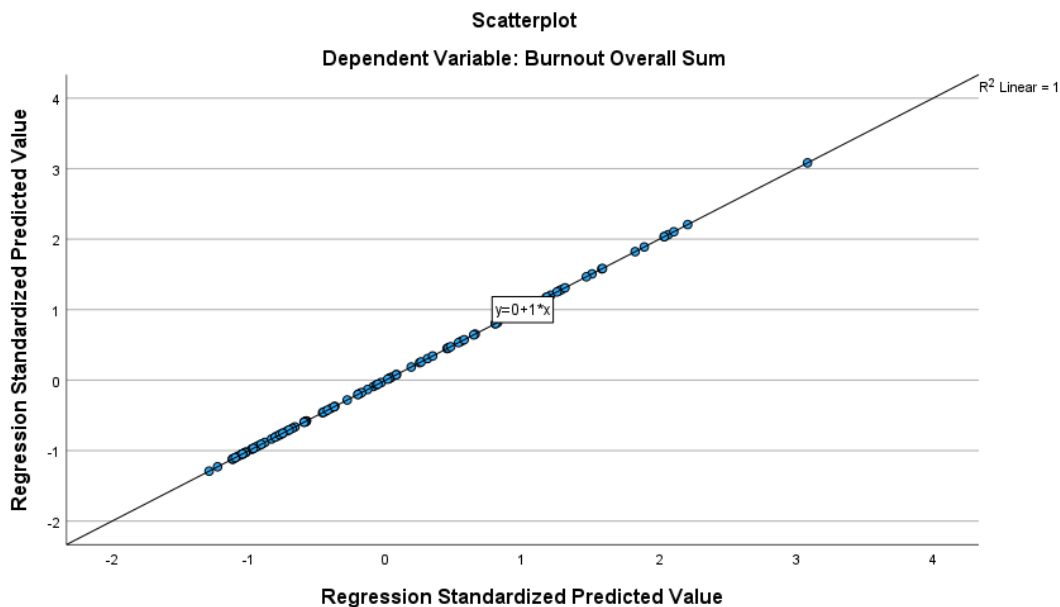
<sup>a</sup>. Predictors: (Constant), Workplace inclusion overall sum, faculty's age.

<sup>b</sup>. Predictors: (Constant), Workplace inclusion overall sum, faculty's age. Interaction variable: Age.

<sup>c</sup>. Dependent variable: Burnout overall sum.

**Figure 6**

*Relationship Between Burnout and the Moderator of Faculty Age*



**Instructor Gender.** I used a standard threshold for statistical significance of  $p < .05$ , as shown in Table 6. The  $p$  value = .150, indicating the relationship was not statistically significant. The moderating variable cannot influence the studied relationship without a statistically significant relationship.

**Table 2**

*Model Summary of Linear Regression: Gender and WI*

Model	$R$	$R$ Square	Adjusted $R$ Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change statistics				Sig. F Change
					$R$ Square Change	$F$ Change	$df1$	$df2$	
1	.377 <sup>a</sup>	.142	.125	4.78511	.142	8.351	2	101	< .001
2	.399 <sup>b</sup>	.160	.134	4.75924	.018	2.101	1	100	.150

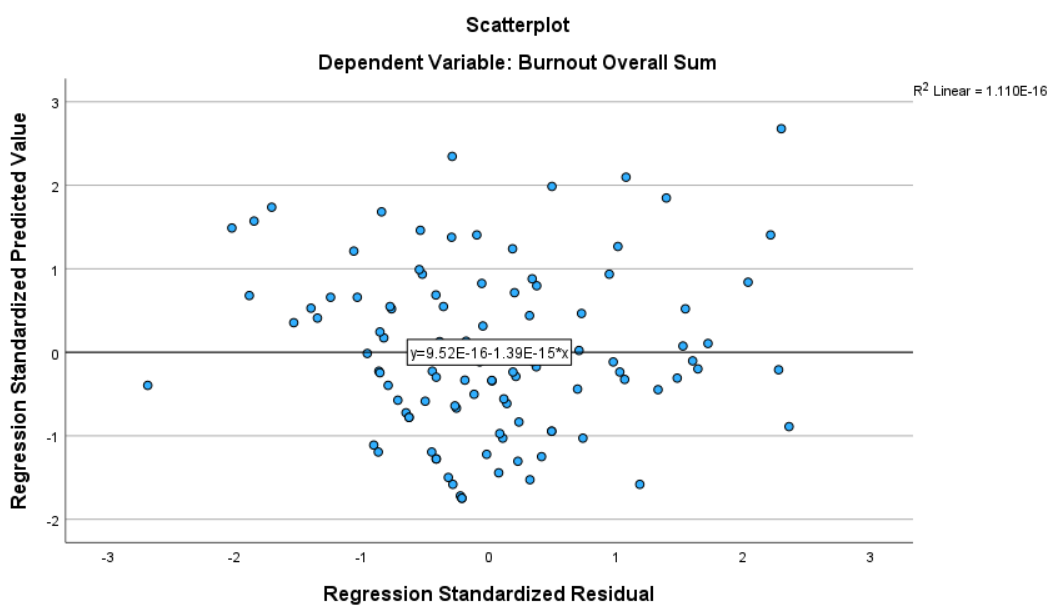
<sup>a</sup>. Predictors: (Constant), Faculty's gender, workplace overall sum.

<sup>b</sup>. Predictors: (Constant), Faculty's gender, workplace overall sum. Interaction variable: Gender.

Figure 7 shows a slope equal to  $-1.39E^{-15}$ , indicating two things about the relationship between the faculty's gender and burnout: there is a negative relationship and that relationship is nearly nonexistent. Therefore, the faculty's gender does not moderate the linear regression relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

**Figure 7**

*Relationship Between Burnout and the Moderator of Faculty Gender*



**Number of Years of Teaching Experience as Adjunct.** I used a standard threshold for statistical significance at  $p < .05$ , as shown in Table 7. The  $p$  value = .327, indicating the relationship is not statistically significant, as seen in Table 7. The moderating variable cannot influence the studied relationship without a statistically significant relationship; therefore, the faculty's number of years of teaching experience as

an adjunct faculty does not moderate the linear regression relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

**Table 7**

*Model Summary of Linear Regressions: Yrs and WI & YrsXWI and WI*

Model <sup>c</sup>	<i>R</i>	<i>R</i> Square	Adjusted <i>R</i> Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change statistics				
					<i>R</i> Square Change	<i>F</i> Change	<i>df</i> 1	<i>df</i> 2	Sig. <i>F</i> Change
1	.386 <sup>a</sup>	.149	.132	4.76467	.149	8.857	2	101	< .001
2	.397 <sup>b</sup>	.157	.132	4.76536	.008	.971	1	100	.327

<sup>a</sup>. Predictors: (Constant), Workplace inclusion overall sum, number of years of teaching experience.

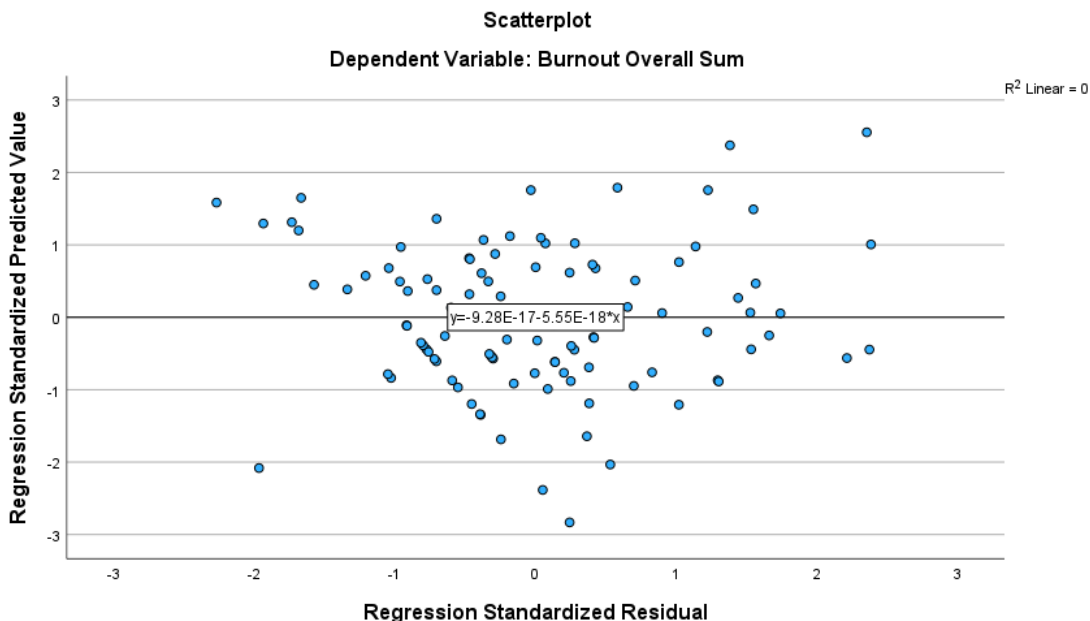
<sup>b</sup>. Predictors: (Constant), Workplace inclusion overall sum, number of years of teaching experience. Interaction variable: Years.

<sup>c</sup>. Dependent variable: Burnout overall sum.

Figure 8 shows a slope equal to  $-5.55E^{-18}$ , indicating two things about the relationship between the faculty's number of years of teaching experience as an adjunct faculty and burnout: There is a negative relationship, and the relationship is nearly nonexistent. Therefore, the faculty's number of years of teaching experience as an adjunct does not moderate the linear regression relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

**Figure 8**

*Relationship Between Burnout and the Moderator of Faculty's Years*



### Summary

Chapter 4 included the data collection, analysis, and the results focused on the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities and whether the instructors' age, gender, and number of years of teaching as adjunct have a moderating effect on this relationship. I collected data over 3 months using an online survey, resulting in 104 complete responses. Of the 104 complete responses, 73% were female respondents, the mean age was 52 years, and the mean years of teaching as an adjunct was more than 10 years. While preparing to run the statistical test of linear regression with moderation, I reviewed all seven assumptions. A 95% confidence interval was used in the linear regression analysis, and I reported a 13.3%



effect size for RQ1. The linear regression included a dependent variable of burnout and an independent variable of workplace inclusion and was statistically significant with a  $p$  value  $< .001$ . I used a standard threshold  $p$  value of  $.05$  for statistical significance.

Statistical significance means that the data allowed me to reject the null hypothesis regarding the existence of a relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities. I created three interaction variables (one for each moderating variable), instructor age (AgeXWI\_Sum), instructor gender (GenderXWI\_Sum), and number of years teaching experience as an adjunct (YrsXWI\_Sum), to test for a moderating effect on the independent variable of workplace inclusion. There is a relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities; however, I found only the faculty's age to have a statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

In Chapter 5, I will restate the study's purpose and the nature of the study. I will also describe why I conducted the study. I will summarize and discuss the study's key findings in connection with the literature presented in Chapter 2. I will discuss the findings regarding the study's theoretical framework. I will discuss the study's limitations and my recommendations for future research. Lastly, I will discuss the study's potential to impact positive social change.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this quantitative study was to explore the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by instructor age, gender, and the number of years teaching as an adjunct. I used an electronic survey to collect data from online university faculty members with experience teaching as adjunct faculty. The study was conducted with the approval of the Walden University IRB. For statistical analysis, I performed a linear regression analysis with moderation tests to answer this study's two research questions regarding whether an adjunct faculty's perceptions of workplace inclusion were related to feelings of burnout in an online university setting and if specific demographic characteristics of the adjunct faculty member influenced this relationship between feeling included in the workplace and feeling burnt out from the workload.

In this chapter, I discuss the study's key findings about each of the variables: workplace inclusion, burnout, faculty age, faculty gender, and the faculty's number of years of teaching experience as adjunct faculty. For RQ1, a linear regression analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between the online university adjunct faculty's workplace inclusion and their burnout. Additionally, the results showed an inverse relationship between the online university adjunct faculty's workplace inclusion and their burnout equal to  $-0.94$ , which means that as workplace inclusion increases among the adjunct faculty at online universities, burnout decreases by a factor of  $0.94$ . For RQ1, I rejected the null hypothesis because there was a relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

For RQ2 regarding the faculty's age, there was a statistically significant relationship between the faculty's age and workplace inclusion. The results also showed a positive relationship between the faculty's age and workplace inclusion, meaning that as the faculty members age and inclusionary practices are in place within the workplace, the faculty's burnout level also persists. The null hypothesis was accepted for RQ2 regarding the faculty's age because the faculty's age did have a moderating effect on the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities. For RQ2 regarding the faculty's gender and number of years of teaching experience as adjunct faculty at online universities, there was no statistically significant relationship between the faculty's gender and workplace inclusion or between the faculty's number of years of teaching experience at online universities and workplace inclusion. For these variables, the results showed an almost nonexistent relationship. For RQ2 regarding the faculty's gender and number of years of teaching experience as adjunct faculty at online universities, I failed to reject the null hypothesis because neither the faculty's gender nor the faculty's number of years of teaching experience as adjunct faculty at online universities had a moderating effect on the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities.

### **Interpretation of the Findings**

The findings of the current study have confirmed those of previous studies in the literature review in numerous ways. In this section, I review key concepts from the literature review and describe how the current study findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend the knowledge in the discipline.

## **Burnout**

Current literature has studied how employees can prevent burnout by investing in resources and how being excluded within the workplace can increase burnout (Boamah et al., 2022; Otto et al., 2021; Russell et al., 2020). The findings from the current study confirm that workplace inclusion of adjunct faculty members at online universities affects faculty burnout. Specifically, the results of this study showed that burnout decreased among adjunct faculty members at online universities as workplace inclusion increased. Previous research discussed known causes of adjunct faculty burnout (e.g., Agarwal & Bansal, 2021; Boamah et al., 2022; Mueller & Morley, 2020; Turner & Garvis, 2023), and while this was not the focus of the current study, common patterns were confirmed.

Previous researchers discussed chronic stress leading to burnout and emotional withdrawal (Turner & Garvis, 2023) and the demands of the adjunct position like excessive workload (Boamah et al., 2022; Kolomitro et al., 2020; Russell et al., 2020; Savchenko et al., 2022; Turner & Garvis, 2023), which was also seen in the current study data as “I feel emotionally drained from my work and I feel used up at the end of the workday.” Connected to RQ1 in the current study and adding to the knowledge within the discipline is the discussion of how a lack of understanding, through insufficient resources, can lead to burnout. Previous research also studied lower levels of well-being and lower job satisfaction and productivity (Agarwal & Bansal, 2021; Boamah et al., 2022; Butters & Gann, 2022; Febler, 2020; Mueller & Morley, 2020; Savchenko et al., 2022; Skinner et al., 2023), which were confirmed within the current study’s results. As a part of the Burnout Inventory, data were collected in this study for: “I have become more

callous towards people since taking this job, and I accomplished many worthwhile things in this job,” and it is the participants’ responses to these statements and others that led to a total burnout score that was analyzed and discussed in this study.

The literature discussed a decrease in the work-life balance of adjunct faculty at online universities and the importance of finding an adequate solution (Boamah et al., 2022; Russell et al., 2020; Skinner et al., 2023; Turner & Garvis, 2023). While work-life balance was not a focus of the current study specifically, previous researchers have studied the connection between a lack of boundaries separating personal life responsibilities and the online adjunct faculty’s duties with burnout (Alshehri, 2020; Boamah et al., 2022; Turner & Garvis, 2023; Zitko & Schultz, 2020). In the current study, I collected data on workplace inclusion, which, for this population, may include their personal life to some degree.

### **Workplace Inclusion**

Previous researchers stated that adjunct faculty often felt not included or isolated from the university regarding general university functions or from participating in faculty opportunities (Alshehri, 2020; Gelman et al., 2022; Hearn & Burns, 2021; Matos & Kasztelnik, 2023; Novotny, 2023; Zitko & Schultz, 2020). In the current study, I used the Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale to collect data on several statements regarding inclusion, including participatory work systems and employee involvement. Additionally, in the contemporary literature, there were discussions of how adjunct faculty reported lower growth opportunities and lower levels of engagement within the university (Alshehri, 2020; Jung & Welch, 2022; Matos & Kasztelnik, 2023; Miller &

Manata, 2023; Skinner et al., 2023). The Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale also included data collected regarding equal access to opportunity and teamwork, interdependence, and collaborative environments, among other statements that led to an overall workplace inclusionary score for each participant. The data collected in the current study and analyzed as an overall workplace inclusion variable confirms the findings from previous studies in the literature.

The employment and use of adjunct faculty in higher education has steadily grown over the past 4 decades, making up approximately two thirds of the institutions' workforce; however, adjunct faculty are often overlooked due to the differing environments from one institution to another (Alshehri, 2020; 2021; Boamah et al., 2022; Gelman et al., 2022; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020; Reeder, 2020; Sam et al., 2021; Swann et al., 2021). The current study extended the knowledge in the discipline by collecting data on representation at all levels of the organization and representation among internal and external stakeholders.

One interesting element in the literature is the discussion of workplace fairness (Simmons et al., 2022). While fair treatment was one data point collected in the current study, it differs from the work by Simmons et al. because the data point was not compared to the treatment of others. Simmons et al. studied how adjunct faculty felt they were treated based on how full-time faculty were treated at the same institution. However, it is interesting to note that many of the key points that the participants listed in Simmons et al.'s study were included in the current study's Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale results related to workplace inclusion, such as limited access to

support, lack of training, limited resources, and no growth opportunities (see Agarwal & Bansal, 2021; Alshehri, 2020; Berlin & Brock, 2021; Bohonos & Sisco, 2021; Hunker & Robb, 2021; Jung & Welch, 2022; Norman et al., 2020; Sam et al., 2021; Swann et al., 2021).

## **Moderating Variables**

### ***Faculty Age***

The current study findings extended knowledge in the discipline by including the participants' demographic characteristics because many studies in the literature did not include these details, and even fewer included them as variables. Contemporary researchers often included a participant's age when reporting demographic data collected (Reeder, 2020). The current study confirmed a median age of 52.5 years. Interestingly, Reeder noted in the Background section of their study that when it comes to job satisfaction, older adjunct faculty reported higher scores than younger faculty but did not discuss if that same observation was seen in their study's results. Cramer and Polanska (2021) collected data from 153 faculty members between the ages of 30 to 56+ years but did not further discuss how these differing ages could have impacted their results.

### ***Faculty Gender***

Many studies throughout the literature reported gender differences within their data (such as more female than male adjunct faculty), which was also confirmed in the current study data (Berlin & Brock, 2021; Burleigh et al., 2021; Cramer & Polanska, 2021; Jung & Welch, 2022; Kolomitro et al., 2020; Reeder, 2020; Savchenko et al., 2022; Swann et al., 2021). However, gender differences were rarely discussed in terms of the

overall study results in previous research. Alternatively, Cramer and Polanska (2021) discussed why female adjunct faculty might choose to teach at online universities; nevertheless, they did not explain how the results pertain to male adjunct faculty, which was extended by the current study. An exception to this was the work of Jung and Welch (2022) who studied how different demographic compositions could impact perceived workplace inclusion. Jung and Welch stated that female employees reported a higher perceived workplace inclusion than male employees. While burnout was the dependent variable in the current study, it would be interesting to study if the results could be replicated. Reeder (2020) discussed that 65% of their participants reported as female adjunct faculty; however, they did not discuss the potential for different results if a future study consisted of mostly male adjunct faculty.

### ***Teaching Experience as Adjunct Faculty***

In the previous literature regarding online teaching, participants' teaching experience ranged from 2 to 30 years in general, compared to the current study's range from 1 to 35 years (with 3 additional years) of experience (Berlin & Brock, 2021). Kolomitro et al. (2020) reported 5–10 years of teaching experience from 210 participants; however, these demographic data were not discussed in their study's results, discussion, or conclusion sections. Burleigh et al. (2021) studied online adjunct faculty members with an average of 12 years of online teaching experience as adjunct faculty; however, they required a minimum of 5 years of experience to participate and did not explain how this exclusionary measure may have impacted the results.



## **Theoretical Framework Analysis**

I chose Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory to frame this study since a lot of the previous research had focused on what adjunct faculty did or did not have available to them to be successful in their roles. The literature that I reviewed detailed examples of resources missing from the adjunct's workplace, such as participation in the university, which was confirmed in the current study as a part of an overall workplace inclusion variable. Hobfoll's COR theory included the concept that individuals engage in their environment to create a work of pleasure and success (i.e., increase resources) while simultaneously working to reduce stress (i.e., loss of resources).

Davidson et al. (2010) used a metaphor of individuals taking a sabbatical to describe Hobfoll's (1989) the following COR theory concepts among higher education faculty: resource loss and replenishment. Davidson et al. explained that faculty on sabbaticals can reduce stress and replenish their resources when they are away from work. In contrast, the individuals who did not take a sabbatical are seen as trying to overcome a potential threat and, therefore, cannot replenish, let alone accumulate lost resources, leading to burnout.

I analyzed the current study results according to Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory and Davidson et al.'s (2010) metaphor. In RQ1, I asked: What is the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities? in the current study, burnout was defined as a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion that results from long-term involvement in work situations that are emotionally demanding (see Mueller & Morley, 2020). The exposure to this emotional

demand, whether repeated or singular, is an example of a resource loss because, according to Hobfoll, the individual does not have the resources to handle the exposure adequately in the first place; therefore, the individual is now presented with a situation that threatens them. According to Hobfoll and Davidson et al., if this demand is not corrected, the individual will likely experience burnout due to repeated exposure. In the current study, I defined workplace inclusion as the degree to which an employee recognizes that they are a valued member of the workplace that satisfies their needs for belongingness and individuality (see Shore et al., 2011). This event exemplifies Hobfoll's concept of resource gain because the individual uses their workplace to retain, protect, and build resources to help protect and aid them against future demands and threats. In the COR theory, Hobfoll proposed that the retainment and use of these resources is how an individual avoids emotional upset, psychological distress, and physical impairment when possible. The current study confirmed this theory, and I rejected the null hypothesis for RQ1: There is a relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities. This relationship is inversely related, so as workplace inclusion increases (i.e., resource gain increases), burnout decreases (i.e., resource loss decreases).

Interestingly, for the current study's second research question, Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory could not be as easily applied. RQ2 was: Are instructor age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as adjunct moderators of the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities? A key difference between this research question and RQ1 was the variables being analyzed: age,

gender, and the number of years teaching as an adjunct. While age and the number of years teaching as an adjunct can be categorized as cumulative, a person's age or experience cannot be gained or lost instantly to meet a time-sensitive demand; they must be earned over time (i.e., being granted a 1-day grading extension to relieve stress), and therefore, cannot be considered for Hobfoll's theory.

### **Limitations of the Study**

One limitation experienced during the data collection phase was using the term "universities," which confused some individuals who work at colleges. Potential participants reached out to me, apologizing that they did not want to risk tainting the results if they were not eligible. Some individuals were not persuaded to participate even with the clarification that had been discussed. Another limitation of this study was the use of regression analysis and the inability to prove causality. Regression analysis can show correlation among variables, and causal relationships may be involved; however, they cannot be shown within regression analysis (Warner, 2012). Another limitation of a quantitative study is the oversimplification of complex results to numerical data.

### **Recommendations**

One recommendation for future research would be to conduct another quantitative study to explore the effects of the faculty's age in adjunct faculty, which is now known to have a statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between workplace inclusion and burnout. It would be interesting to see data from different age groups, which could help higher education institutions when employing adjunct faculty members. A second recommendation for future research would be to conduct a qualitative study to

explore the perceptions of the relationship between workplace inclusion and faculty burnout by collecting data through interviews and providing in-depth details on this topic.

### **Implications**

This study can influence positive social change for the individual adjunct faculty members and the online university they are employed with, their students, and their families. A result of this study was a statistically significant relationship between workplace inclusion and burnout among adjunct faculty at online universities, and the faculty's age was discovered to have a moderating effect on that relationship. The use of adjunct faculty in higher education has grown significantly over the past 4 decades (Butters & Gann, 2022; Hardy et al., 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020; Starcher, 2017). By focusing specifically on the inclusion of online adjunct faculty into higher education institutions and faculty burnout, the faculty can gain the resources needed to avoid burnout and, in return, give their students the best teaching practices available, while avoiding work-life conflicts due to reduced exhaustion associated with burnout. The inclusion of adjunct faculty into institutional practices will not only increase the adjunct faculty's resources but also strengthen the institution. These implications can be initiated with an interactive training program at the institution with the faculty member connected from their first day. Adjunct faculty at online universities can benefit from the results of this study by building awareness of the need to seek out resources, like training; participating in work systems; and advocating for fair treatment, among other workplace inclusionary efforts, which allow them to build their resources needed to avoid burnout.

## **Conclusion**

The use of adjunct faculty members in online universities has grown for decades, as do their job demands, leading to burnout (Hardy et al., 2017; National Center for Education Statistics, 2020). Workplace inclusion has been studied among adjunct faculty in recent years; however, no research has been conducted on the possible relationship between workplace inclusion and burnout among adjunct faculty at online universities. The current study was designed and conducted to fill the gap in the literature by using a quantitative nonexperimental correlational research design to investigate the relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout among adjunct faculty at online universities, moderated by faculty age, gender, and the number of years of teaching as an adjunct. An electronic survey was used to collect data from 104 random participants via personal connections, public information, and social media. It was discovered that there was a statistically significant relationship between the level of workplace inclusion and burnout of adjunct faculty at online universities, with the faculty's age being the only moderating variable with statistically significant results.

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## Appendix A: Burnout Inventory and Permissions



### Burnout Inventory

Note: Test name created by PsycTESTS

**PsycTESTS Citation:**

Iverson, R. D., Olekalns, M., & Erwin, P. J. (1998). Burnout Inventory [Database record]. Retrieved from PsycTESTS. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t11584-000>

**Instrument Type:**

Inventory/Questionnaire

**Test Format:**

A 5-point Likert-type scale format is used to measure employees' perceptions of burnout.

**Source:**

Iverson, Roderick D., Olekalns, Mara, & Erwin, Peter J. (1998). Affectivity, organizational stressors, and absenteeism: A causal model of burnout and its consequences. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol 52(1), 1-23. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1006/jvbe.1996.1556>, © 1998 by Elsevier. Reproduced by Permission of Elsevier.

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doi: 10.1037/t11584-000

### Burnout Inventory

#### Items

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##### Emotional Exhaustion

1. I feel emotionally drained from my work.
2. I feel used up at the end of the workday.
3. I feel burned out from my work.

##### Depersonalization

1. I've become more callous towards people since taking this job.
2. I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.
3. I really don't care what happens to some patients.

##### Personal Accomplishment

1. I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.
2. I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.
3. I feel good after working closely with my patients.

## Appendix B: Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale and Permissions



### Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale

Note: Test name created by PsycTESTS

**PsycTESTS Citation:**

Roberson, Q. M. (2006). Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale [Database record]. Retrieved from PsycTESTS. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t21446-000>

**Instrument Type:**  
Rating Scale

**Test Format:**  
All ratings are made on a 9-point Likert-type scale ranging from not at all to completely.

**Source:**

Roberson, Quinetta M. (2006). Disentangling the Meanings of Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations. *Group & Organization Management*, Vol 31(2), 212-236. doi: <https://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1059601104273064>, © 2006 by SAGE Publications. Reproduced by Permission of SAGE Publications.

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doi: 10.1037/t21446-000

### Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale

#### Items

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1. Equal access to opportunity (D)
2. Equal access to opportunity (I)
3. Equitable systems (D)
4. Equitable systems (I)
5. Fair treatment (D)
6. Fair treatment (I)
7. Affirmative action initiatives (D)
8. Affirmative action initiatives (I)
9. Representation at all levels of the organization (D)
10. Representation at all levels of the organization (I)
11. Representation among internal and external stakeholders (D)
12. Representation among internal and external stakeholders (I)
13. Demonstrated commitment to diversity (D)
14. Demonstrated commitment to diversity (I)
15. Diversity mission, goals, and strategies (D)
16. Diversity mission, goals, and strategies (I)
17. Leadership commitment to diversity (D)
18. Leadership commitment to diversity (I)
19. Diversity education and training (D)
20. Diversity education and training (I)
21. 360-degree communication and information sharing (D)
22. Participatory work systems and employee involvement (D)
23. Power sharing (D)
24. Teamwork, interdependence, or collaborative environments (D)
25. Shared commitment to organizational goals (D)
26. Focus on innovation and creativity (D)
27. Organizational flexibility, responsiveness, and agility (D)
28. Demonstrated commitment to continuous learning (D)
29. Collaborative conflict resolution processes (D)
30. Shared accountability and responsibility (D)
31. Demonstrated commitment to community relationships (D)
32. 360-degree communication and information sharing (I)
33. Participatory work systems and employee involvement (I)
34. Power sharing (I)
35. Teamwork, interdependence, or collaborative environments (I)
36. Shared commitment to organizational goals (I)
37. Focus on innovation and creativity (I)
38. Organizational flexibility, responsiveness, and agility (I)

PsycTESTS™ is a database of the American Psychological Association



doi: 10.1037/t21446-000

#### Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations Scale

##### Items

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- 39. Demonstrated commitment to continuous learning (I)
- 40. Collaborative conflict resolution processes (I)
- 41. Shared accountability and responsibility (I)
- 42. Demonstrated commitment to community relationships (I)

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NOTE: I = inclusion; D = diversity.