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Impact of Perception of Supervisors' Knowledge-Sharing Behaviors on Newcomers' Information-Seeking Behaviors

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Melissa A. Denton

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
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2020

Abstract

Impact of Perception of Supervisors' Knowledge-Sharing Behaviors on Newcomers'

Information-Seeking Behaviors

by

Melissa A. Denton

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Industrial Organizational Psychology

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May 2020

Abstract

During their first year, new employees rely on their supervisors to share knowledge that will help them adjust to their new jobs. The purpose of this quantitative, correlation study was to examine the relationship between newcomers' perceptions of supervisors' knowledge-sharing and the information-seeking tactics of (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (e) observing. The theoretical foundation used in this study was social exchange theory. The independent variable was measured using items from the Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim, and the dependent variables were measured using Miller's Information-Seeking Strategies Scale. Survey data were collected from 179 individuals who self-identified as being in non-supervisory roles and had less than 1-year job tenure. The participants were recruited through Survey Monkey and social media. Spearman correlation indicated a strong, positive correlation between knowledge-sharing attitudes and direct inquiry. Spearman correlations also indicated inverse relationships between knowledge-sharing attitudes and the remaining information-seeking tactics of (a) indirect inquiry, (b) third-party-inquiry, (c) testing limits, and (d) observing. These results suggest that when supervisors are willing to directly and openly share knowledge, new employees will respond by also using direct tactics because there is less perceived need for covert tactics. These results have important social change implications for organizations, supervisors, and new employees. By encouraging positive knowledge-sharing attitudes among supervisors, organizations support new employees' direct information-seeking behaviors, which perpetuates further positive social interactions.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Introduction

The workforce landscape is constantly changing due to increased globalization and related technological advancements. Knowledge-sharing research has advanced to address those changes and fostered the development of knowledge-management strategies in a world that increasingly relies on employee's willingness to share knowledge (Chennamaneni, Teng, & Raja, 2012; Zimmermann & Ravishankar, 2014). According to Navimipour and Charband (2016), knowledge sharing increases employee productivity and performance and enhances team efficiency and organizational learning. Knowledge sharing also increases organizational agility by making it easier and faster to complete tasks (Navimipour & Charband, 2016). Unfortunately, organizations temporarily lose some of the competitive advantage gained from knowledge-management efforts when hiring new employees (Abdul-Jalal, Toulson, & Tweed, 2013) because newcomers need time to master job tasks, clarify their roles, and socially integrate into the organization (Akremi, Nasr, & Richebe, 2014; Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Rubenstein, & Song, 2013). According to Zhang, Liao, Yan, and Guo (2014), newcomers are more likely to exhibit proactive adjustment behaviors such as seeking information and feedback when they perceive that their supervisors are willing to share resources. To date, however, no study has examined the impact of perception of supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes on the newcomers' information seeking during organizational entry. The purpose of this study was not only to address this gap but to

examine how perception of supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes impact newcomer's specific information-seeking tactics, including (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (e) observing.

This study on how perception of knowledge-sharing attitudes impact newcomer information-seeking behaviors has important social change implications for Indiana companies and their employees. According to the United States Department of Labor's (2018b) Bureau of Labor Statistics, the seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate in the State of Indiana at the end of April 2018 was 3.2%. To differentiate their companies from others competing for the same limited talent pool, human resource (HR) professionals can use the results of this study to create and promote an organizational culture that encourages more effective and timely knowledge exchange during organizational entry. The potential benefits of improved knowledge transfer from the company perspective include improved newcomer job performance (Zhang et al., 2014) and better overall employee engagement (Cooper-Thomas, Paterson, Stadler, & Saks, 2014). The results of this study may also contribute to improved task (Kim & Yun, 2015) and team performance (Xiang, Lu, & Gupta, 2013) and encourage supervisors to find new ways to better support newcomers during organizational entry. The social change implications from the new employee's perspective go beyond improved performance and engagement. For the new employee, improved knowledge transfer means not only better social integration and adjustment (Zhang et al., 2014), but a greater sense of well-being and

satisfaction (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2014) from the perception that supervisors and coworkers support newcomer's learning and value their contribution.

Chapter 1 of this study begins with background information from the literature related to knowledge sharing and information-seeking behaviors during organizational entry. Chapter 1 also contains the problem statement and the related purpose of the study. In this chapter, I describe the research question and hypotheses, theoretical foundation, and nature of the study. Chapter 1 also includes the assumptions, scope, delimitations, limitations, and significance of this study. Chapter 1 ends with a summary of the main points of the chapter and an outline of Chapter 2.

Background

According to Swart, Kinnie, van Rossenberg, and Yalabik (2014), knowledge sharing is the process by which employees deliberately transmit knowledge assets or information on what to do and how to do it in the workplace. During organizational entry, the transfer of knowledge is essential to newcomers' assimilation into the organization (Schaubroeck, Peng, & Hannah, 2013). Researchers have identified several intrinsic and extrinsic factors that impact knowledge sharing in the workplace. For example, employees' perceived behavioral control or perceptions of the relative ease of knowledge sharing influences their knowledge-sharing intentions (Chennamaneni et al., 2012; Ho, Ting, Bau, & Wei, 2011; Ramayah, Yeap, & Ignatius, 2013; Zhang & Ng, 2012). However, other intrinsic factors such as enjoyment in helping others (Chennamaneni et al., 2012; Shu & Chuang, 2011; Yan & Davison, 2013; Yesil, Buyukbese, & Koska,

2013), self-efficacy or confidence in the ability to provide the knowledge (Kim & Yun, 2015; Ojedokun & Idemudia, 2014; Yesil et al., 2013; Yueru, Weibo, Ribbens, & Juanmei, 2013), and trust in organizational leadership (De Clercq, Dimov, & Thongpapanl, 2013; Hsu & Chang, 2014; Kim & Ko, 2014; Seba, Rowley, & Lambert, 2012; Shen, Tang, & Netto, 2014; Shu & Chuang, 2011) have been shown to have a greater impact on actual knowledge-sharing behaviors (Zhang & Ng, 2012). Researchers have also found that employees' attitudes toward knowledge sharing and their subjective norms to share knowledge impact their knowledge-sharing intentions and behaviors (Lai, Chen, & Chang, 2014; Rahman, Osmangani, Daud, & Fattah, 2015).

According to Chennamaneni et al. (2012), knowledge sharing is affected by the interaction of the knowledge holder's characteristics and factors in the external environment. Knowledge-sharing intentions are positively influenced by employees' access to technology and work processes that support employee interaction and knowledge exchange (Chennamaneni et al., 2012; De Clercq et al., 2013; Huang & Huang, 2012; Seba et al., 2012; Wu & Lee, 2016). Although some research has shown that extrinsic rewards and incentives or at least the anticipation of the same have a positive influence on knowledge sharing (Ramayah et al., 2013), other researchers have found no statistically significant relationship between external motivators and knowledge sharing (Chennamaneni et al., 2012; Seba et al., 2012; Yesil et al., 2013). Researchers have also found that knowledge sharing is influenced by both group (Lin, Ye, & Bi,

2014; Wu & Lee, 2016) and individual levels of perceived support from supervisors and coworkers (Lee, Yoo, & Yun, 2015).

During organizational entry, newcomers are socialized to their new work environments through organizational socialization tactics (Akremi et al., 2014; Benzinger, 2016; Lapointe, Vandenberghe, & Boudrias, 2014), interpersonal interactions with supervisors and coworkers (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013), and newcomers' proactive socialization behaviors (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2014; Tang, Liu, Oh, & Weitz, 2014). Information seeking and feedback-seeking behaviors are examples of proactive socialization tactics used by newcomers to learn how to perform their jobs (Cooper-Thomas et al., 2014) and how to socially adjust to the new work environment (Cooper-Thomas & Stadler, 2015; Zhang et al., 2014).

Problem Statement

Although research has shown that supervisors' and coworkers' levels of support and responsiveness positively influence newcomers' information-seeking behaviors during organizational entry (Cho, 2013; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013) and that perception of those social exchanges influence their information-seeking behaviors (Thacker & Stoner, 2012; Xiaoyan & Jing, 2016), there is no research showing the relationship between newcomer' perceptions of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing and newcomers' information-seeking tactics. According to social exchange theory and current research on knowledge sharing, individuals influence each other's knowledge-sharing behaviors through their social interactions (Lapointe et al., 2014; Lee

et al., 2015; Yueru et al., 2013). Previous research has shown that uncertainty, conflict, and mistrust negatively impact the relationship between a veteran employee and a newcomer (Lee et al., 2015; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016; Schaubroeck et al., 2013). During organizational entry, newcomers have to gain respect for their technical competence and achieve social acceptance (Lapointe et al., 2014) from veteran employees who are not necessarily open to the newcomers' attempts at interaction (Hsu & Chang, 2014). Swart et al. (2014) found that supervisors' perceptions that newcomers lack an affective commitment to the organization, to the team, or to the profession influences their knowledge sharing behavior even when a newcomer has the technical competence to perform the job.

Although both supervisors and coworkers influence newcomer's information-seeking behaviors, Srikanth and Jomon (2013) found that supervisors have more influence than coworkers or peers on the reduction of a newcomer's role ambiguity during organizational entry. According to Choi, Moon, and Nae (2014), newcomers place greater value on information received from supervisors than from coworkers as supervisors are perceived to have greater knowledge, skill, and competence. Supervisors also have more influence over newcomers' socialization outcomes, including role clarity (Lapointe et al., 2014) and performance (Akremi et al., 2014). In addition, Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2013) found that lower levels of social support from supervisors had a greater impact on newcomer's voluntary turnover intention than did lower levels of support from coworkers. To support knowledge exchange during organizational entry,

organizations need to understand the relationship between newcomers' perceptions of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing and newcomers' information-seeking tactics; however, this relationship has not been examined within the current literature on either knowledge sharing or information seeking within the workplace. Hence, the research problem addressed in this study was that it was unknown how newcomers' information-seeking behaviors including (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (e) observing are related to the perception of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this quantitative correlation study was to examine the relationship between perceptions of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing and five information-seeking tactics used by organizational newcomers including (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (e) observing.

Research Question and Hypotheses

Research Question: "Is there a relationship between perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing correlated and newcomers' information-seeking tactics of direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing?"

Null Hypothesis 1: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by

Bock and Kim (2002), are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of direct inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Alternative Hypothesis 1: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of direct inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Null Hypothesis 2: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of indirect inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Alternative Hypothesis 2: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of indirect inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Null Hypothesis 3: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of third-party inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Alternative Hypothesis 3: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by

Bock and Kim (2002), are correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of third-party inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Null Hypothesis 4: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of testing limits as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Alternative Hypothesis 4: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of testing limits as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Null Hypothesis 5: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of observing as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Alternative Hypothesis 5: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of observing as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Theoretical Foundation

Social exchange theory served as the theoretical framework of this study. Homans (1958) developed the concept of social behavior as an exchange to understand better the

motivation behind social behaviors. In social exchange, knowledge is a *good* or potential source of value to both parties in the relationship (Homans, 1958). According to Homans (1958, 1974), individuals are psychologically driven to engage in social interactions based on their perceptions of the potential benefits or costs of the exchange. Homans' (1974) social exchange theory included five propositions that can be used to explain information-seeking behaviors. According to Homans (1974), employees' behaviors are influenced by the expectation that an exchange will have a positive outcome (success proposition). In addition, employees will tend to repeat those behaviors that led to positive outcomes in the past (Homans, 1974). To be repeated, the outcomes must however have some value to the employee (value proposition; Homans, 1974). While the employee's perception of the value of the outcome will diminish over time (deprivation-satiation proposition), the behavior will continue as long as the perceived benefits continue to outweigh the costs (emotional proposition; Homans, 1974).

Social exchange theory (Homans, 1974) is relevant to the research questions of this study because both knowledge sharing and information-seeking behaviors rely on the social exchange relationships that develop between supervisors and newcomers during organizational socialization (Lapointe et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2015). During these interpersonal interactions, employees have some expectation that other employees will apply the same social exchange principles and reciprocate through shared meaning and experience (Blau, 1960; Chirawattanakij & Ractham, 2016). According to Hermida and Luchman (2013), when employees perceive some inequity in a working relationship, they

may elect not to engage in future exchanges with that person or to withhold something of value to re-establish balance in the relationship. A more detailed explanation of how social exchange theory influences both knowledge sharing and information-seeking behaviors is provided in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study: Quantitative

The research method for this study was a nonexperimental survey design in which quantitative data will be collected from new employees on their perceptions of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing (the independent variable) and each of five information-seeking tactics (the dependent variables), respectively. The quantitative research method was appropriate for the purpose of this study because it allows for an examination of the relationship between the variables (Creswell, 2009). The data were analyzed using correlation analysis, which according to Anseel, Beatty, Shen, Lievens, and Sackett (2015) is frequently used to determine the statistical significance of the relationship of information seeking to various antecedents. In this study, correlation analysis was used to provide insight into the direction and strength of the relationship between the independent variable of perception of knowledge sharing and the dependent variable of information seeking (Creswell, 2009).

The independent variable of the study—newcomer perception of attitude toward knowledge sharing—was measured using a five-item Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002) and adapted for this study. Items were scored on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Bock,

Zmud, Kim, and Lee (2005) reported a coefficient alpha estimate of reliability of .92 for scores on the measure. The dependent variables of (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (e) observing were measured using a 20 item, information-seeking tactic instrument developed by Miller (1996). Miller (1996) reported a coefficient alpha estimates of reliability of .80, .74, .77, .69, and .80 for direct inquiry, indirect inquiry/disguising conversations, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing / surveillance, respectively, for the scores on the measure.

Convenience sampling was used to determine the selection of participants from a population of full-time employees within various organizations in the State of Indiana. The sample included newcomers with up to one year of organizational tenure. An email invitation to participate in the study was sent to the identified newcomers. The email invitation contained the purpose of the study, directions providing informed consent and for completing the study, how long the study would take, and the deadline for completing the study. The email specified that participants must have had less than one year of tenure at their current employer to participate in the study. The email informed the participants that by clicking on a link, they were confirming their eligibility to participate and providing their informed consent. The link directed the newcomer to the perceptions of knowledge-sharing attitudes survey and to the information-seeking tactics survey, in which they were asked to respond to items based on situations in which they were very uncertain about how to perform their job and wanted to find out how their immediate supervisor believed the job should be done (Miller, 1996). The newcomer's online survey

was set up in such a way as to assure that neither names nor email addresses would be associated with the responses.

Definitions

Attitude toward knowledge sharing: “Degree of one’s positive feelings about sharing one's knowledge” (Brock et al., 2005, p. 91).

Direct inquiry: Information-seeking tactic in which newcomers directly seek information by asking overt questions of an information source such as a supervisor or coworker. This tactic involves interaction with the source and is used when the newcomer feels comfortable with the source and with seeking the information (Miller & Jablin, 1991).

Disguising conversations: Information-seeking tactic which involves a newcomer “disguising information-seeking attempts as a natural part of conversation” in order to appear less threatening to the information source (Miller & Jablin, 1991, p. 108). According to Miller (1996), the disguising conversations tactics is closely related to indirect inquiry.

Feedback-seeking behaviors: A form of information-seeking behavior in which newcomers deliberately and consciously attempt to acquire information about other’s evaluation of their performance (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford, 1986).

Information-seeking tactics: Strategies used by newcomers to deliberately and consciously acquire information necessary for the achievement of individual and organizational goals (Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Cummings, 1985; Miller & Jablin,

1991). The subcategories of information-seeking tactics include direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, disguising conversations, surveillance, and observing (Miller & Jablin, 1991).

Indirect inquiry: Information-seeking tactic in which newcomers ask indirect questions or deliver subtle hints to acquire information from an information source. This tactic is used when the newcomer does not want to be embarrassed or to make the source of the information uncomfortable (Miller & Jablin, 1991).

Knowledge: In an organizational context, knowledge is any information which resides within individual employees that is considered to have value to the achievement of both individual and organizational goals (Brock et al., 2005).

Knowledge management: An organization's efforts to "create, recognize, archive, access, and apply knowledge" (Brock et al., 2005, p. 88).

Knowledge sharing: The transmission of knowledge from an information source to another individual (Brock et al., 2005).

Newcomer: An individual who has recently started a new job or entered a new organization (Miller & Jablin, 1991).

Observing: Information-seeking tactic used by newcomers to obtain information by watching others' behaviors in specific situations. This tactic is used when the newcomer is comfortable with the information source but believes that there are consequences to acquiring the information through more overt means such as direct inquiry (Miller & Jablin, 1991).

Organizational entry: Period from immediately following a newcomer's first day of employment to the point when the newcomer has learned the roles and responsibilities of the new position and is considered to be fully integrated into the organizational culture of their employer (Miller & Jablin, 1991).

Surveillance: Information-seeking tactic used by a newcomer to inconspicuously acquire information. Surveillance tactics are used by newcomers to get a general sense of the overall environment or the information source's attitude rather than to acquire information about a specific situation (Miller & Jablin, 1991). Miller (1996) found that surveillance tactics are closely related to observing tactics.

Testing limits: Information-seeking tactic in which newcomers deliberately provoke a response from the information source by breaking or deviating from organizational rules and social norms. Testing limits is used by newcomers to determine the strength of other employees' attitudes toward the rule or norm (Miller & Jablin, 1991)

Third-party inquiry: Information-seeking tactic in which newcomers use a third-party as a source of information instead of seeking information from the primary source. This tactic is used when the newcomer wants to confirm information acquired through other tactics or when the newcomer is uncomfortable with or does not have access to the information source (Miller & Jablin, 1991).

Veteran employee: An employee who has acquired through tenure, background, and experience the technical, social, and normative knowledge required to contribute to the mission and performance of their organization (Ashford, 1986).

Assumptions

According to Cook and Campbell (1979), experimental realism is the extent that an experiment involves the participant in a meaningful way, and mundane realism is the extent that the experiment's conditions mimic the real world. To maximize both experimental and mundane realism, the new employee participants in this study were instructed to consider their responses with regard to social exchanges in their workplace. One assumption was that the sample of participants represents the larger employee population and that the participants' responses to the study generally reflect the behaviors and attitudes of that population. Another assumption was that the newcomers participating in this study would understand the directions and respond honestly to the corresponding questions on their perceptions of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing and each of the five information-seeking tactics. In addition, the assumption was that the participants would have enough knowledge of the Internet and related technologies to access the survey link provided within the email invitation. These assumptions were necessary because participants were required to self-report their responses in an online survey. Within the context of this study's theoretical foundation of social exchange, the participants' responses were also assumed to reflect an awareness that the benefits of effective knowledge exchange during newcomer socialization outweigh the perceived social costs of participating in the study (Homans, 1974). Finally, several assumptions are associated with a Pearson correlation, including (a) the

observations are independent, (b) the observations are normally distributed, and (c) the observations have a linear relationship (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009).

Scope and Delimitations

The scope of this study includes data collected from employees from a number of different organizations and industries. These participants represent a variety of positions and hierarchical levels. The generalizability of the results of this study are limited to those employee populations with similar characteristics to the study sample. The sample of participants were selected and assigned to a sample based on their organizational tenure, not their background or experiences. Therefore, employees who were less than 18 years of age were excluded. Newcomer participants with more than one year of organizational tenure and those who directly supervised other employees were also excluded from this study. One of the specific experiences not taken into consideration in this study was the participants' previous positive or negative knowledge-sharing exchanges or information seeking during organizational entry. These prior experiences may have influenced participants' ratings on the measures of the perceptions of attitudes toward knowledge sharing or the specific information-seeking tactics.

Limitations

According to Creswell (2009), researchers need to identify and take steps to minimize threats to external and internal validity. This study included several limitations that may threaten its external validity or generalization across different persons and contexts (Cook & Campbell, 1979). The first limitation was the use of a convenience

sample of participants, which may limit the application of the study result across different organizations or industries. Another related threat to generalizability may result from self-selection bias. For example, despite assurances that their responses would be confidential, the participants may have chosen to not complete the survey out of concern that their names would be associated with their responses. As a result, the survey responses may be biased toward participants with a higher tendency to share knowledge or to seek information (see Lee et al., 2015). To address self-selection bias, I informed participants that their responses would be tracked using a response identification number and that IP address tracking and email address tracking would be disabled in SurveyMonkey.

This study also has limitations related to internal validity, or the ability to make inferences from the data that may impact the results (see Cook & Campbell, 1979). One of the limitations is self-report bias, as participants may have responded in a manner that they believed supports their organizations' newcomer retention goals as opposed to responding based on actual attitudes or behaviors. Another related limitation includes social desirability bias because, despite being assured that their responses would be confidential, participants may have responded in a manner that they believed would minimize relationship conflict (see Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016).

As with self-selection bias, self-report and social desirability bias may skew the results of this study (see Creswell, 2009). To minimize response bias, self-report bias, and social desirability bias, I collected anonymous data and ensured the participants that I

would make every effort to maintain their confidentiality and protect their identities, including using participant identification numbers randomly generated by SurveyMonkey. In addition, I took into account limitations related to confounding variables that could limit the construct validity of the study. According to Cook and Campbell (1979), confounding variables are extraneous variables which have a statistical relationship to the independent variable, thus potentially impacting the dependent variable. Confounding variables are unknown and therefore, cannot be controlled (Cook & Campbell, 1979). I have addressed limitations related to confounding variables, however, by operationalization or clearly defining the independent and dependent variables within this study as recommended by Cook and Campbell (1979).

In this study, researcher or experimenter bias is another threat to internal validity, as I have witnessed situations during which both new employee's perceptions of and supervisor's actual knowledge-sharing behaviors appeared to impact newcomers' information-seeking tactics. These observations could contribute to confirmation bias or a tendency to interpret the results of the study to meet my expectations (see Cook & Campbell, 1979). To help reduce researcher bias, I asked others to double check my analysis of the results, as recommended by Cook and Campbell (1979).

Significance of the Study

This study was motivated by the need to for improved understanding of the the processes through which new employees adjust to their job roles, so that organizations can more effectively bring new employees up to speed with their jobs and integrate them

into the organizational culture. A new employee's perceptions of social interactions have the potential to negatively influence the newcomer's choice of adjustment behaviors, thus leading to (a) interpersonal conflict (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016), (b) poor role performance (Srikanth & Jomon, 2013), (c) withdrawal behaviors, and (d) voluntary turnover (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). According to the United States Department of Labor's (2018a) Bureau of Labor Statistics, voluntary turnover in the United States, as measured by annual quits compared to annual average employment, steadily increased from 20.3% in 2013 to 26% in 2017. Although employees may choose to leave an employer for any number of reasons, research has shown that perception of interpersonal interactions with supervisors and other colleagues during the first year of employment strongly influenced their voluntary turnover intention (Akremi et al., 2014; Allen & Shanock, 2013; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Cooper-Thomas and Stadler (2015) stated that more research is therefore needed to understand how newcomers' evaluations of the benefits and costs associated with these interactions influence their choice of proactive socialization behaviors. Cooper-Thomas and Stadler (2015) also noted that organizations struggle to develop socialization strategies that address perception and mitigate the negative impact of increasing employee turnover rates. This study may advance practices within the human resource field by helping HR professionals to develop and structure their newcomer socialization activities to account for how perception influence not only their proactive behaviors, but ultimately their intention to remain with the organization. In addition, this study could advance practice in the field of leadership development by

emphasizing the importance of knowledge sharing and directly addressing how perceptions of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing can contribute to a newcomer's turnover intention (Rawung, Wuryaningrat, & Elvinita, 2015).

This study contributes to existing newcomer socialization literature by using data from new employees to examine the impact of their perceptions of supervisors' attitudes on the new employees' specific behaviors. Although previous research has independently examined the organizational and individual factors that influence either knowledge sharing (Kim & Yun, 2015; Rawung et al., 2015) or information-seeking behaviors (Anseel et al., 2015; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016), researcher have not directly considered the influence of perceptions of supervisor's attitude toward knowledge sharing on a newcomer's information-seeking tactics.

This results of this study may advance knowledge in the discipline by exploring the impact of perceptions of attitudes toward knowledge sharing on the specific information-seeking behaviors of new employees. Organizational leaders can use the results of this study to develop effective approaches to encouraging knowledge transfer. For example, if perceptions of knowledge-sharing attitudes are found to have a positive impact on direct inquiry and observing, HR professionals can use the results to support the implementation of socialization tactics that support supervisors during direct interaction. A statistically significant relationship between perception of attitudes toward knowledge sharing with direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and/or observing would enable HR professionals to support supervisors' formal and

informal efforts to establish trusting relationships with and between employees, as recommended by Hsu and Chang (2014) and by Shu and Chuang (2011).

The implications of the study for positive social change include improved organizational strategies for knowledge transfer and individual awareness of the impact of perceptions of attitudes toward knowledge sharing on various information-seeking tactics. For example, this study can support the creation of new or revised human resource programs that improve the transfer of knowledge to the emerging workforce. Homans (1958) suggested that lasting social change begins as a series of simple interactions between two or more people in an organization. The results of this study can contribute to the quality of workgroup interactions and offset the negative impact of knowledge losses by helping supervisors and coworkers learn ways to support knowledge sharing that might otherwise negatively influence information-seeking behaviors.

Beyond addressing a gap in the existing knowledge sharing literature, this study also has important theoretical implications. Homans' (1958, 1974) proposed social exchange theory in which individuals' perceptions of the benefits or costs of engaging in an exchange influenced their future exchange behaviors. The results of a study on attitudes toward knowledge sharing that impact information-seeking strategies can further support or refute the propositions outlined in Homans' (1974) revision of social exchange theory. This study found that newcomer perception of supervisor's knowledge-sharing attitudes has a stronger impact on direct inquiry compared to the opposing tactics of indirect or third-party inquiry. The results indicated that newcomers place greater value

on face-to-face interaction (value proposition). The results also indicated that previous direct knowledge exchanges had positive outcomes (success proposition) or were rewarded (stimulus proposition). The results of this study also found that newcomer perception of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing had a negative relationship to indirect inquiry and testing limits. The results indicated that the newcomer may have experienced some consequence in similar knowledge exchanges in the past (emotional proposition).

Summary

In today's competitive business environment, organizations need to ensure that new hires quickly and easily acquire information about the technical and social aspects of their new jobs (Navimipour & Charband, 2016). During organizational entry, organizations use both formal and informal strategies to help newcomers become socialized to the new work environment (Benzinger, 2016). In turn, new employees rely on proactive socialization tactics, including information- or feedback-seeking to learn about and integrate into their new environment (Zhang et al., 2014). Veteran employees' willingness to share their knowledge with newcomers can enhance the effectiveness of those strategies and contribute to newcomer's integration and adaptation (Ashford, 1986). Knowledge sharing can improve communication and increase coordination within an organization (Lee, 2011). Poor attitudes or the perception of poor attitudes toward knowledge sharing especially from supervisors, however, can have a negative impact on newcomer socialization (Zhang et al., 2014), resulting in decreased organizational

commitment and job satisfaction and increased voluntary turnover intention among newcomers (Bauer, Bodner, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007). Therefore, organizations need to understand how perceptions of supervisors' attitudes toward sharing knowledge influence newcomers' information-seeking strategies during organizational entry. Through this study, I attempted to understand the relationship between newcomer's perceptions of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing and the information-seeking tactics of direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing. In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the literature on knowledge sharing and information seeking during organizational entry. Chapter 2 also includes additional information on the study's theoretical foundation of social exchange theory.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

In today's fast-paced global economy, organizational newcomers are expected to quickly learn new roles and adjust to new work environments (De Vos & Freese, 2011; Zhang et al., 2014). Newcomers voluntarily engage in information- or feedback-seeking behaviors to increase social acceptance (Bauer et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2014) and reduce the uncertainty associated with initial role ambiguity (Bauer et al., 2007; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). Newcomers rely on the veteran employees to share information that is necessary for integration into the organization (Morrison, 1993a; Zhang et al., 2014). Knowledge sharing has been found to positively influence newcomers' adaptation (Houghton, 2014) and improve their performance (Kim & Yun, 2015; Xiang et al., 2013). Supervisors may hesitate, however, to share knowledge with newcomers out of uncertainty over the consequences (Gallagher & Sias, 2009; Hsu & Chang, 2014) or for fear of losing control (Kim & Lee, 2012; Oh, 2012; Ramayah et al., 2013; Swart et al., 2014; Zhang & Ng, 2012). New newcomer perception of the support received from supervisors during organizational entry influenced their role clarity and job satisfaction (Akremi et al., 2014). However, behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions that limit or prevent knowledge exchange are a problem for organizations looking to sustain a competitive advantage through internal knowledge management practices (Abdul-Jalal et al., 2013). Given the importance of knowledge exchange during organizational entry,

this problem was investigated in this study by examining how perception of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing influence the choice of information-seeking tactics.

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between perception of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing and the information-seeking tactics of (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (e) observing (Miller, 1996).

This literature review includes an overview of social exchange theory (Blau, 1960; Homans, 1974) and some of its previous applications within the literature on knowledge sharing and information-seeking behaviors. The literature review also provides background on knowledge-sharing behaviors and information-seeking tactics and reviews studies related to those concepts. After the separate examination of knowledge sharing and information-seeking, the focus of this literature review is on the interaction of the two variables during newcomer's organizational entry – a relationship that has been largely ignored in the literature.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search strategy for this study consisted of an examination of the scholarly resources published between 2010 and 2018 and accessible through the Walden University Library available for review at <http://academicguides.waldenu.edu>, and through Indiana Tech's McMillen Library available for review at <http://library.indianatech.edu>. The initial strategy consisted of a text search for articles containing various combinations of the phrases *information-seeking*, *knowledge sharing*,

or *newcomer socialization* within the available research databases, including Academic Search Complete, Business Source Complete, Communication and Mass Media Complete, eBook Collection, ProQuest Central, PsychARTICLES, ScienceDirect, and SocINDEX with full text. A review of the literature results led to an expanded search for various Boolean combinations of keywords and phrases such as *feedback-seeking*, *information giving*, *knowledge*, *knowledge management*, *knowledge transfer*, *organizational socialization*, and related terminology within the full text of each article and within the subject terms. A review of references cited within the literature results also revealed prominent seminal works related to the development of the theories and constructs of knowledge sharing and information-seeking. Seminal works were accessed through a literature search of the previously listed databases and Google Scholar using expanded publication dates of 1950 to 2018 and the addition of the names of various noted theorists or researchers including *Ashford*, *Blau*, *Cummings*, *Emerson*, *Homans*, *Jablin*, *Miller*, or *Morrison* to the keyword search for related scholarly articles.

Social Exchange Theory

The theoretical framework for this study was social exchange theory, which is one of the most commonly used theoretical perspectives in both knowledge sharing (Wang & Noe, 2010) and information seeking (Guo, Liao, Liao, & Zhang, 2014) research. According to social exchange theory, individuals alter their behavior based on their valuation of the costs and benefits of participating in an interaction (Homans, 1958). According to Emerson (1976), the concept of social behavior as an exchange relationship

evolved from the works of Blau (1960, 1964), Homans (1958), and Thibaut and Kelley (1959). Homans (1958) suggested that individuals interacting in cohesive groups influence each other's behavior through an exchange of material and non-material goods that have some value to the parties and thus the ability to reinforce their behavior.

Homans's (1958) social exchange theory assumed that individuals are rational beings who determine the standards by which they evaluate the costs or benefits of engaging in alternative social interactions. Homans (1974) later proposed that social exchanges that produce positive outcomes (success proposition) are rewarded (stimulus proposition) and have value to the individual (value proposition) are likely to be repeated or continued. Homans (1974) also proposed that the perceived value of a reward would diminish over time (deprivation-satiation proposition) but that an individual would remain happy with an exchange as long as the outcomes either exceeded expectations or helped to avoid negative consequences (emotional proposition). Homans (1958) theorized that the frequency of social interactions within a dyad or between a socially linked pair of individuals is driven by the perceived value of the result, such as an expectation of a positive outcome or reward. Homans (1958, 1974) stated that individuals are assumed to remain satisfied with the frequency of interaction if they receive more benefit or less cost than expected.

Thibaut and Kelley (1959) viewed Homans' (1958) individualistic interpretation of social exchange as problematic. According to Thibaut and Kelley (1959), individuals determine the standards for evaluating the benefits or costs of engaging in relationships

by comparing new interactions to any number of previous experiences. Thibaut and Kelley (1959) claimed that the same sociometric measures of attraction (liking) and repulsion (disliking) that influenced the individual comparison of social exchange alternatives would not be applicable in larger groups. Blau's (1960) theory of social integration evolved from Homans's (1958) concept of social behavior as exchange and later addressed Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) concerns (Blau, 1965). Blau (1965) theorized about the nature of interpersonal exchanges within the larger organization. Blau (1965) suggested that researchers look beyond individual perceptions of social exchanges to examine the impact of the interaction of intrinsic and extrinsic factors on the evaluation of alternatives. In a review of the works of Blau (1965), Homans (1958), and Thibaut and Kelley (1959), Emerson (1976) claimed that social exchange theory was not a theory at all, but rather a way of applying the concept of economic exchange to social relationships. Emerson (1976) believed that social exchange theory represented an oversimplification of the factors underlying these complex relationships. Researchers have, however, continued to apply social exchange theory to studies on workplace interactions.

Social Exchange Theory and Knowledge Sharing

Researchers have applied social exchange theory to a number of studies on knowledge sharing as a result of the seminal work of Blau (1960, 1964), Homans (1958), and Thibaut and Kelley (1959). For example, Bock et al. (2005) collected survey data on knowledge sharing intentions from 154 individuals at 27 organizations across 16 industries in Korea. Bock et al. (2005) found that the anticipation of a reciprocal or social

exchange relationship positively influenced attitudes towards knowledge sharing. Wang and Noe (2010) conducted a narrative review of knowledge-sharing research and found that among the 76 qualitative and quantitative studies reviewed, Blau's (1964) social exchange theory had been used to examine the positive influence of extrinsic factors such as managerial support and organizational rewards on knowledge-sharing behaviors. According to Wang and Noe (2010), social exchange theory had also been used in studies of the intrinsic factors influencing knowledge sharing, including perceptions of the level of trust and justice present in organizational-employee and supervisor-employee relationships.

More recent studies have also applied social exchange theory to examinations of factors influencing knowledge-sharing behaviors. For example, Kim and Ko (2014) used social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) to examine the impact of various human resource practices and managerial behaviors on knowledge sharing. Kim and Ko (2014) found that newcomer perception of an organization's selection procedures, compensation and reward policies, performance appraisal methods, and training and development strategies served as predictors of knowledge-sharing behaviors among 266,000 full-time employees of various agencies within the United States federal government. Using Blau's (1964) social exchange theory, Lee et al. (2015) also conducted a quantitative analysis of survey data collected from 183 dyads of employees and their supervisors and found that intrinsic characteristics such as exchange ideology and learning orientation positively influenced employees' knowledge-sharing behaviors. Lee et al. (2015) also found that coworker

support positively influenced knowledge sharing even when the employees' exchange ideologies and learning orientations were low.

Alternative Knowledge-Sharing Theories

Other theories have also been used to examine knowledge sharing, including the theory of planned behavior and its precursor the theory of reasoned action (Madden, Ellen, & Ajzen, 1992). Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action has been used to explain the relationship between attitudes, intentions, and behaviors. According to Shu and Chuang (2011) and Teh and Yong (2011), the theory of reasoned action states that an individual's motivation to engage in a particular behavior is driven by a combination of attitude and subjective norms. Ajzen's (1985) theory of planned behavior expanded the theory of reasoned action. Ajzen (1985) suggested that the interaction of an individual's attitude toward a behavior, subjective organizational norms, and the individual's perceived level of control over the outcome influences intentions and behaviors. The theories of reasoned action and planned behavior have been used to study a number of factors impacting knowledge sharing (Huang & Huang, 2012; Zhang & Ng, 2012).

In the previously mentioned study, Bock et al. (2005) took not only social exchange but also the theory of reasoned action into consideration when examining knowledge sharing. Bock et al. (2005) found that newcomer perception of the organizational climate as fair, innovative, and focused on affiliation predicted knowledge-sharing intentions. Although the theories of reasoned action (Fishbein &

Ajzen, 1975) and planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985) have been used to explain the cognitive processes that motivate knowledge sharing (Bello & Oyekunle, 2014), previous research using the theory of planned behavior has not addressed information-seeking tactics as a source of motivation for knowledge-sharing attitudes, intentions, or behaviors.

Social Exchange Theory and Information Seeking

Researchers have also applied social exchange theory to studies on information seeking. For example, Miller and Jablin (1991) utilized social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which involves the cost-benefit analysis of potential alternatives, to present a model of factors that might impact newcomers' information-seeking tactics. Miller and Jablin (1991) stated that the uncertainty associated with the newcomer's role would affect their communication behaviors, including efforts to seek information (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Miller and Jablin (1991) also noted the potential social costs of seeking information to reduce that uncertainty. Miller and Jablin (1991) claimed that the choice of information-seeking tactic was based on perception of relational and contextual factors, including the newcomers' relationships with the source and the content of the information.

In other research using social exchange theory, Schaubroeck et al. (2013) found that 512 new enlistees to a United States Army training program used both instrumental (information-based) and relational (exchange-based) tactics to adjust to their new environment. Schaubroeck et al. (2013) found that the cognition- and affect-based trust that developed from perception of leaders' and peers' responsiveness increased newcomer

socialization outcomes as measured by newcomer's level of organizational identification in as little as seven weeks. In addition, Lapointe et al. (2014) conducted a longitudinal study using social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), which took place over 224 newcomers' first year of employment within various industries in Canada. Lapointe et al. (2014) found that institutional socialization tactics, including those which provide the newcomer with information necessary for adjustment, contributed to role clarity. Role clarity mediated the positive relationship between socialization tactics and newcomers' self-rated performance. Lapointe et al. (2014) also found that the development of trustful relationships with information sources such as supervisors and coworkers mediated the positive relationship between an organization's socialization tactics and newcomer adjustment as measured by self-reported levels of organizational commitment.

Alternative Theories of Information Seeking

Uncertainty reduction theory is another framework used in the literature to examine factors that influence newcomer information seeking during socialization. Berger and Calabrese (1975) developed the uncertainty reduction theory which posited that organizational newcomers are motivated to seek information to reduce uncertainty about their new work environment. Berger and Calabrese (1975) hypothesized that newcomer uncertainty would increase information-seeking behaviors. In developing their respective models of feedback seeking and information-seeking behaviors, Ashford and Cummings (1983) and Miller and Jablin (1991) noted the role that uncertainty played in newcomers' organizational entry. Using uncertainty reduction theory, Bauer et al. (2007)

conducted a meta-analysis of 70 articles on the impact of organizational socialization tactics and newcomers' information-seeking behaviors on newcomer adjustment. Bauer et al. (2007) found that information-seeking behaviors contributed to newcomers' role clarity and social acceptance. Bauer et al. (2007) used Miller and Jablin's (1991) concept of information seeking but focused on the type of information sought including referent, appraisal, and relational information rather than identifying the seven information-seeking tactics. Using uncertainty reduction theory, Beus, Jarrett, Taylor, and Wiese (2014) conducted a longitudinal study of 540 basketball players and found that newcomers' performance adjustment was influenced by the interaction of experience in terms of time and in terms of amount. Li, Harris, Boswell, and Xie (2011) also focused on newcomers' active attempts to reduce uncertainty but in contrast to Bauer et al. (2007) found that neither supervisor's nor coworker's developmental feedback contributed to newcomers' performance.

Social exchange theory was the theoretical foundation for the current study. Social exchange theory considers the interdependence of the source of motivation and the corresponding attitude, intention, or behavior (Homans, 1958; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Accordingly in this study, I considered newcomer perceptions of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing as a source of motivation for organizational newcomers' choice of information-seeking tactics. According to social exchange theory, the frequency of interaction is contingent upon the perceived outcome of the exchange. In this study, I therefore examined the impact of perception of attitude toward knowledge sharing on the

new employees' perceived benefits of using the information-seeking tactics of direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing.

Knowledge Sharing During Newcomer Socialization

The transfer of knowledge from veteran employees to new hires is an integral part of the socialization of organizational newcomers (Moring, 2011). Knowledge sharing is defined as the mutual exchange of information, ideas, experiences, and expertise among individuals in an organizational setting (Daoyou, Zhongju, & Juanlan, 2015; Kim & Yun, 2015; Kim & Lee, 2012). According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), attitudes are positive or negative dispositions toward behaviors or situations (as cited in Hwang, 2011). Previous studies have found that employees' attitudes toward knowledge sharing predicted their knowledge-sharing intentions (Bello & Oyekunle, 2014; Ho et al., 2011; Shu & Chuang, 2011), which in turn predicted their knowledge-sharing behaviors (Bello & Oyekunle, 2014; Park, Song, Lim, & Kim, 2014; Teh & Yong, 2011; Zhang & Ng, 2012). The current study benefits from this framework by also considering perception of attitude toward knowledge sharing as a precursor to newcomers' information-seeking intentions and behaviors.

Previous Research on Knowledge Sharing

Previous research on knowledge sharing focused on the intrinsic characteristics and extrinsic factors that serve as predictors of knowledge-sharing behaviors. For example, research conducted by Ho et al. (2011) and by Oh (2012) determined that altruism or the willingness to help others for no personal gain is a strong predictor of

knowledge sharing behavior. Other individual characteristics shown to influence knowledge sharing behavior included self-efficacy (Kim & Lee, 2012; Oh, 2012; Zhang & Ng, 2012) and a corresponding sense of self-worth (Ho et al., 2011; Ramayah et al., 2013; Teh & Yong, 2011). The findings on the direct relationship between self-worth and knowledge sharing contradict earlier research by Bock et al. (2005) who found that self-worth contributes to favorable attitudes toward knowledge sharing indirectly through subjective norms to share knowledge. Ramayah et al. (2013) and Teh and Yong (2011) reasoned that the difference is explained better by the higher levels of self-worth associated with particular professions rather than by subjective norms to share knowledge. Teh and Yong (2011) recommended that future research examine the relationship between self-worth and attitudes toward knowledge sharing in a variety of professions and work environments to determine self-worth's level of influence on knowledge sharing within those contexts. Employees' level of trust in the organization (De Clercq et al., 2013; Muneer, Javed Iqbal, Khan, & Choi Sang, 2014) and in the supervisor (Kim & Ko, 2014) were also shown to influence knowledge-sharing attitudes and behaviors. In addition, De Vos and Freese (2011) and Xu, Kim, and Kankanhalli (2010) found that organizational leaders and coworkers who are perceived as credible sources of information and who provide timely and relevant responses to requests for information influence attitudes toward knowledge sharing. Individual perception of the level of control over the knowledge-sharing process also predicted knowledge-sharing behavior (Ho et al., 2011; Kim & Lee, 2012; Oh, 2012; Zhang & Ng, 2012).

A number of researchers have also examined the external factors that influence knowledge sharing. For example, transformational leadership approaches including those that provide individual inspiration and consideration (Rawung et al., 2015) and ethical (Yueru et al., 2013) and supportive (Carmeli, Gelbard, & Reiter-Palmon, 2013) leadership behaviors were found to be predictors of employees' knowledge sharing. The extent to which organizations formalize their knowledge sharing process (De Clercq et al., 2013) and provide systems and technology for information exchange (Lavanya, 2012) also influences knowledge sharing behavior in an organization. The social norm to share knowledge influenced both knowledge-sharing attitudes and intentions (Ho et al., 2011; Hwang, 2011; Ramayah et al., 2013; Teh & Yong, 2011).

Information Seeking During Newcomer Socialization

The concept of knowledge sharing implies an exchange of information between two or more parties (Zimmermann & Ravishankar, 2014). In an organization, information- or feedback-seeking behaviors can prompt or perpetuate knowledge-sharing behaviors (Georgiadou & Siakas, 2012). During organizational entry, information seeking describes the range of tactics used by newcomers to proactively reduce uncertainty and solicit information about job duties, performance expectations, and cultural norms from veteran employees (Benzinger, 2016; Morrison, 1993b). Ashford and Cummings (1981) identified two information-seeking tactics inquiry and monitoring, which differ in levels of engagement of and interaction with the knowledge holder or information target. Miller and Jablin (1991) took Ashford and Cummings' (1981)

definitions and delineations of information-seeking behaviors one step further and proposed seven categories of information-seeking tactics including direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, disguising conversations, surveillance, and observing. In a later study on perception of the social costs of using each of the seven information-seeking tactics, Miller (1996) used factor analysis to reduce the seven information-seeking tactics to five tactics including (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (e) observing. Miller (1996) found that direct inquiry is the most frequently used information-seeking tactic followed by observing, third-party, indirect, and testing limits. Miller (1996) also found that newcomers were more likely to use third-party inquiry when seeking information from supervisors due to the perceived social costs.

According to Anseel et al. (2015), feedback seeking is a form of information-seeking behavior that is specifically intended to solicit information about the seeker's performance. Within the previous literature, the terms information seeking and feedback seeking have been categorized as proactive adjustment behaviors (Cooper-Thomas & Wilson, 2011; Zhang et al., 2014) and used interchangeably (Anseel et al., 2015). While the present study examines the impact of perception of attitude toward knowledge sharing on specific information-seeking behaviors as proposed by Miller and Jablin (1991) and later reduced by Miller (1996), Miller and Jablin's (1991) original framework was based upon earlier conceptions by Ashford and Cummings (1981, 1985) that focused on feedback-seeking behaviors. Consequently, the conceptual framework of this study

benefited from previous analyses that examined either information seeking or feedback-seeking behaviors.

Ashford and Cummings (1981) first advocated for a holistic examination of feedback-seeking behaviors by arguing that prior research on the feedback construct had focused on the organizational benefits as opposed to examining the value of the overall feedback process to the individual worker. According to Ashford and Cummings (1985), individuals are not only the recipients of their organizations' feedback efforts but rather actively engage in feedback-seeking behaviors. The two primary feedback-seeking strategies identified by Ashford and Cummings (1981, 1983) were active monitoring and active inquiry, which differed in the amount of effort and risk required of the individual. Ashford and Cummings (1983) defined active monitoring as feedback seeking through the observation of others' performance of a task. Active monitoring also involved observing the feedback received by supervisors and other workers and noting direct and indirect responses to certain behaviors. Active inquiry, on the other hand, involved the individual directly asking the information source for feedback on performance.

Using Ashford and Cummings' (1985) work, Miller and Jablin (1991) identified seven information-seeking tactics and categorized them according to each tactic's level of detectability by the information target. Miller and Jablin (1991) classified the information-seeking tactics of (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, (e) disguising conversations, (f) surveillance, and (g) observing

as either overt or covert as each of the tactics varied in its presumed level of detectability by the information target.

Miller and Jablin (1991) focused on how perception of other workers' potential reactions influenced the choice of information-seeking tactic. Miller and Jablin (1991) defined direct inquiry as an overt information-seeking tactic that involves the newcomer directly interacting with and asking a veteran employee for information. Conversely, Miller and Jablin (1991) defined indirect inquiry as a covert tactic that involves non-interrogative questioning or hinting by the newcomer. According to Miller and Jablin (1991), indirect inquiry allowed the newcomer to minimize embarrassment and the information target to potentially save face by avoiding response. Miller and Jablin (1991) identified third-party inquiry as another covert tactic in which the newcomer avoided the primary target and instead sought information from a secondary source such as another newcomer or outsider. Third-party inquiry allowed the newcomer to once again avoid direct interaction with the information target. Miller and Jablin (1991) stated that confrontational newcomers, however, force the information target's response by testing limits. Testing limits involves newcomers deliberately breaking the rules or challenging authority to determine the true extent of job expectations and social norms. The information target would likely have been aware of the behavior but may or may not have recognized such provocation as an attempt to acquire information. Disguising conversations was another covert information-seeking tactic identified by Miller and Jablin (1991) that involves the newcomer using casual conversation and vague references

to acquire information. Miller and Jablin (1991) considered disguising conversations more covert than indirect inquiry as the information target was less likely to be aware of the tactic. The information-seeking tactic of observing involves the newcomer watching specific information targets to determine appropriate behaviors (Miller & Jablin, 1991). Although not necessarily directly engaged by the newcomer, the information target was deemed by Miller and Jablin (1991) as aware of the observation. On the other hand, surveillance or discreet monitoring was another information-seeking tactic identified by Miller and Jablin (1991) of which the information target was unlikely to have been aware. According to Miller and Jablin (1991), surveillance allowed newcomers to get an overall understanding of the work environment without engaging specific individuals.

According to Anseel et al. (2015), recent studies have used an overall measure of information seeking or feedback seeking without delineating the specific approach. Cooper-Thomas and Wilson (2011) attributed this generalization to the perceived complexity of the interaction between newcomers' intrinsic characteristics and the external work environment. Traits found to positively influence information seeking include conscientiousness (Tidwell & Sias, 2005), self-efficacy (Anseel et al., 2015), curiosity (Harrison, Sluss, & Ashforth, 2011), and orientation toward learning (Cho, 2013). According to research conducted by Xu et al. (2010), the source of information (knowledge holder) influenced information seekers' perceptions of the relevance of the information and the relational benefit of engaging the source. External factors in the work environment that have been found to predict information seeking include the

organizational standardization of socialization processes (Krasman, 2011) and the quality and availability of feedback (Lai et al., 2014) from both supervisors and coworkers (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016; Srikanth & Jomon, 2013). Examinations of newcomers' information-seeking behaviors have found positive correlations for various outcomes related to newcomer socialization such as reduced uncertainty (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford & Cummings, 1983), improved social integration (Morrison, 1993a; Zhang et al., 2014), and task- (Li et al., 2011) and job-related performance (Guo et al., 2014; Srikanth & Jomon, 2013). Cooper-Thomas and Wilson (2011), however, recommended continuing to draw on the seminal work of Ashford and Cummings (1983, 1985) and Miller and Jablin (1991) to achieve robust results on antecedents and outcomes of newcomers' socialization behaviors.

Knowledge Sharing and Information Seeking During Newcomer Socialization

The research question for this study was: "Is there a relationship between perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing correlated and newcomers' information-seeking tactics of direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing?"

Table 1 summarizes studies published within the last five years that examined various antecedents and outcomes of either knowledge sharing or information-seeking behaviors. Table 1 is ordered chronologically by year of publication and includes information on sample size and composition as well as identifies the independent, dependent, mediating, and moderating variables as applicable. Research findings related

to the variables of interest information-seeking and knowledge sharing are also included in Table 1.

Table 1

Previous Studies on Information-Seeking or Knowledge-Sharing Behaviors

| Author/Date | Sample | Research variables | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| | | Independent variables | Dependent variables | Mediator(s) / Moderator(s) |
| Nifadkar and Bauer (2016) | <i>N</i> = 286 pairs of new engineers (job tenure < 6 months) and their supervisors | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - conflict with coworkers - information adequacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - frequency of information-seeking from coworkers - frequency of information-seeking from supervisor - information adequacy - self-evaluated task mastery - supervisor-rated task mastery | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social anxiety with coworkers - socializing with a supervisor - frequency of information-seeking from coworkers - frequency of information-seeking from supervisor |
| Anseel et al. (2015) | <i>N</i> = 69 studies, coded first as feedback-seeking behavior overall and then as inquiry or monitoring feedback-seeking behaviors separately | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cost perceptions - Value perceptions - Organizational tenure - Job tenure - Feedback propensity - Learning orientation - Self-esteem - Self-efficacy - Tolerance for ambiguity - Contingency uncertainty - Role ambiguity - Positive feedback - Feedback source | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feedback-seeking behavior - Job satisfaction - Job performance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - None |

(table continues)

| Author/Date | Sample | Research variables | | |
|---------------------------|--|---|--|--|
| | | Independent variables | Dependent variables | Mediator(s) / Moderator(s) |
| Kim and Yun (2015) | <i>N</i> = 149 pairs of employees and their supervisors | - Coworker knowledge sharing | - Task performance (Supervisor-rated) | - Self-efficacy - Abusive supervision |
| Swart et al. (2014) | <i>N</i> = 645 employees | - Affective, normative, and continuance commitment to the organization, the profession, the team, and the client | - Intention to both share and obtain knowledge | - None |
| Bello and Oyekunle (2014) | <i>N</i> = 388 faculty members (75% > five years tenure) | - Knowledge-sharing attitudes - Knowledge sharing intentions - Intrinsic knowledge sharing motivation | - Knowledge-sharing intentions - Knowledge-sharing behaviors | - None |
| Yan and Davison (2013) | <i>N</i> = 430 employee users of virtual communities (52% < 5 years of experience) | - Enjoyment in helping others - Sense of self-worth - Flow (intrinsic motivation stemming from peak experiences) - Knowledge seeking | - Knowledge contributing - Enjoyment in helping others - Sense of self-worth - Flow | - Flow |

Morrison (1993a) stated that the information-seeking tactics of inquiry and monitoring are examples of proactive socialization behaviors used by newcomers to obtain information about the new work environment. A meta-analysis of 69 studies on feedback seeking conducted by Anseel et al. (2015) found that intrinsic factors (value perception, feedback propensity and orientation, and self-efficacy) and extrinsic factors (amount of positive feedback, transformational leadership, and relationship quality) positively influenced the frequency of information seeking. When Anseel et al. (2015) attempted to examine the influence of inquiry and monitoring behaviors on those same antecedents and outcomes, the sample of previous research that specified the tactic used by the seeker was too small to allow for analysis. Anseel et al. (2015) recommended that future research discern and measure the influence of various information-seeking tactics on outcomes.

None of the studies outlined in Table 1, however, examined the relationships between perceptions of attitudes toward knowledge sharing and the distinct information-seeking tactics of direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, disguising conversations, surveillance, or observing (Miller & Jablin, 1991). Two of the studies summarized in Table 1 found that attitude toward knowledge sharing was a predictor of knowledge-sharing intention and behavior (Bello & Oyekunle, 2014) and that knowledge-sharing behaviors contributed to an information seeker's job performance (Kim & Yun, 2015), but neither Bello and Oyekunle (2014) nor Kim and Yun (2015) examined the influence of perceptions of knowledge-sharing attitudes on specific information-seeking tactics in those relationships. Nifadkar and Bauer (2016) found that

conflict with coworkers negatively influenced the frequency of information seeking from coworkers and positively influenced the frequency of information seeking from supervisors. Nifadkar and Bauer (2016) did not, however, examine the impact of perception of knowledge-sharing attitudes on distinct information-seeking tactics in those relationships. My study addressed this gap in the literature by examining how perceptions of attitudes toward knowledge sharing differ in influencing the use of the information-seeking tactics of direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing.

At the same time that newcomers are actively seeking information about the workplace, the organization's veteran employees are also gathering information about and evaluating the newcomer's potential (Gallagher & Sias, 2009). Bello and Oyekunle (2014) found that attitudes toward knowledge sharing contributed to the knowledge-sharing intentions and behaviors of faculty members at four universities in Nigeria. In addition, Bello and Oyekunle (2014) found that intrinsic motivation to share knowledge influenced faculty members' knowledge-sharing behaviors. Yan and Davison (2013) found a similar relationship between intrinsic motivation and knowledge-sharing behaviors in a virtual community. Yan and Davison (2013) also found that the knowledge holder's intrinsic motivation mediated the relationship between knowledge seeking and knowledge contributing behaviors. Despite these relationships, none of the studies summarized in Table 1 examined how attitudes toward knowledge sharing from the perspective of the knowledge seeker influence specific information-seeking tactics. IN this study, I addressed that methodological gap by asking new employees to identify their

perceptions of supervisor's knowledge-sharing attitudes for the purposes of evaluating the relationship to information-seeking tactics.

Summary and Conclusion

Knowledge sharing by veteran employees is key to organizational newcomers' adaptation (Houghton, 2014) and social integration (Morrison, 1993a; Zhang et al., 2014). Newcomers use proactive adjustment behaviors, such as information-seeking, to solicit knowledge from veteran employees about job duties, performance expectations, and organizational cultural norms (Benzinger, 2016; Morrison, 1993b). Researchers have applied a number of theories to the study of knowledge sharing and information seeking, including social exchange theory (Homans, 1958) and the theories of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985) and uncertainty reduction (Berger & Calabrese, 1975), respectively. Previous research found that intrinsic factors, such as self-efficacy (Anseel et al., 2015) and curiosity (Harrison et al., 2011) and extrinsic factors, such as organizational socialization practices (Krasman, 2011) and feedback from supervisors and coworkers (Lai et al., 2014; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016; Srikanth & Jomon, 2013) influenced information-seeking behaviors. Previous research on knowledge sharing has also found that intrinsic factors such as self-efficacy (Kim & Lee, 2012; Oh, 2012; Zhang & Ng, 2012) and perceived level of control (Ho et al., 2011; Kim & Lee, 2012; Oh, 2012; Zhang & Ng, 2012) and extrinsic factors such as managerial support (Wang & Noe, 2010) and subjective organizational norms (Lapointe et al., 2014) influenced knowledge-sharing attitudes, intentions and behaviors. Miller and Jablin (1991) proposed that the newcomer's perception of the knowledge holder's reaction would not only influence the

choice of information-seeking tactic but potentially influence the outcome of the knowledge exchange.

Although researchers have examined various antecedents and outcomes of knowledge sharing, Yan and Davison (2013) conducted the only study within the literature that simultaneously examined knowledge seeking and knowledge-sharing behaviors. Yan and Davison's (2013) sample of 430 employees responded to survey and interview questions based on their dual role as both seeker and contributor within a virtual community. To date, researchers have not examined the influence of new newcomer perception of attitudes toward knowledge sharing on specific information-seeking tactics. In this study, I addressed the identified gap and add to the current base of knowledge by examining the relationship between perceptions of attitudes toward knowledge sharing and the five information-seeking tactics of inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing (Miller, 1996). In Chapter 3, I provide the rationale for the choice of research design based on previous examinations of both knowledge sharing and information-seeking. Chapter 3 also includes information on the methodology and procedures for data collection and analysis used to conduct the study. Potential threats to validity and ethical considerations are also discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between new employee perception of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing and the different information-seeking tactics of newcomers. Chapter 3 begins with a description of the research design and rationale for the study. Next, I discuss the research methodology, including the population, sample size, recruitment procedures, instruments, and data collection procedures. In this chapter, I also discuss the data analysis, threats to validity, and ethical concerns and procedures for the study's participants. Chapter 3 ends with a summary of the design and methodology and introduction to Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

The research method for this study was a nonexperimental survey design in which quantitative data were collected on perception of attitude toward knowledge sharing (the independent variable) and each of the five information-seeking tactics of direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing (the dependent variables; Miller, 1996). The unit of sampling and of statistical analysis was a new employee. According to Creswell (2009), survey designs allow for the efficient and cost-effective collection of attitudinal data from samples that can then be generalized to the population. The nonexperimental survey design is consistent with research designs needed to advance knowledge in the discipline because the predictor variable of perception of attitudes toward knowledge sharing cannot be manipulated only passively

observed and its relationship to the criterion variable of information-seeking tactics analyzed in retrospect (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

The study data were collected from newcomers from two separate questionnaires online via SurveyMonkey an online survey development and administration software and downloaded to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software for analysis minimizing time and resource constraints (Cook & Campbell, 1979). The design consisted of newcomer's responses on a knowledge-sharing attitudes scale and an information-seeking tactics scale. According to Wang and Noe (2010), this design choice is consistent with previous research on knowledge sharing which has measured the impact of variables such as reward systems and interpersonal trust on knowledge-sharing attitudes and intentions.

Methodology

Population

The target population for this study consisted of all possible sampling units of employees in the United States. According to the United States Department of Labor's (2016) Bureau of Labor Statistics, the total number of nonfarm employees in November 2016 was estimated at over 178 million employees. This population represents employees in a variety of positions and industries in both the private and public sectors. The population consisted of working-age adults between 18 and 64 years, with an approximately equal number of male and female participants. Because it is not practical to access the stated population, a convenience or nonprobability sample of new employees was used to determine the study participants from individuals employed

within the United States. According to Cook and Campbell (1979), convenience sampling poses a threat to external validity as the findings are only applicable to the study participants and cannot be generalized across different persons, settings, and times. However, for the purposes of this study, convenience sampling was appropriate due to the ease of accessibility to the sample and the limited timeframe for completing the study.

Sample Size

To determine an adequate sample size for this study, I used the software package G*Power 3.1.3 assuming a significance level or alpha of .05. Because I was testing five dependent variables, I controlled for the increased risk of a type 1 error by applying the Bonferroni correction (Armstrong, 2014). I also used a statistical power level of .80. According to Creswell (2009), this power level is commonly used in research as it allows for the greatest sensitivity to the criterion's influence on the dependent variable. The sample size was selected to detect a correlation of 0.25 as statistically significant. The assumption of a correlation of this magnitude was consistent with research conducted by Morrison (1993a), which found that the information-seeking tactics of newcomers have a modest impact on the socialization process due to other factors that influence information exchanges, such as formal orientation programs and informal social support systems. The sample size for this study, using correlation analysis, needed to be a minimum of 179 participants.

Procedures for Recruitment and Data Collection

I recruited participants by purchasing access to eligible participants from SurveyMonkey Audience. I also recruited participants through my community contacts.

An invitation to participate in the study was distributed in written format via email to the accessible newcomer participants. The email invitation to participate included an introduction to the study, the stipulation that participants must be at least 18 years old and have less than one year of tenure at their current organization. Responses from individuals who reported that they were less than 18 years old or had more than one year of organizational tenure were excluded. The email invitation also included my name and contact information and that of my advisor. The email contained an informed consent statement explaining the procedure including the approximate amount of time needed to participate, the confidential nature of the responses, the voluntary nature of the study, and the potential benefits and risks of participating. The email also contained a link to an online survey in SurveyMonkey containing the Information-Seeking Strategies Scale developed by Miller (1996) and the Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002). The email stated that by clicking on the link, the participant was agreeing to the informed consent and indicating that he or she was at least 18 years old and met the maximum requirement of one year or less of organizational tenure. The email also stated that the participant had two weeks to click the link and complete the survey. Once the participant had responded to the corresponding survey, he or she was asked to click the submit button. Clicking on the submit button recorded the participant's responses and opened a web page thanking the participant for their participation in the study. If the participant did not respond to all of the survey questions prior to clicking on the submit button, the participant was prompted to respond. If the participant closed the web browser at any time prior to clicking the submit button, the

survey ended, and the participant's responses were not recorded. Once the data had been collected, the data were imported to SPSS software for statistical analysis via a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Once the data had been collected, the data were imported to SPSS software for statistical analysis via a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. No additional debriefing or follow up with either sample of participants was required.

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

The independent variable of perception of attitude toward knowledge sharing was measured using five items from an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002). The dependent variables were measured using the Information-Seeking Strategies Scale developed by Miller (1996). A description of each of the instruments, including their relevant psychometric properties follows next.

Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale. I adapted the five items or statements created by Bock and Kim (2002) and used in Bock et al. (2005) to measure the independent variable of perception of attitude toward knowledge sharing that was administered to the participants. Bock et al. (2005) employed a Likert scale ranging from 1 (very rarely) to 5 (very frequently) for each of the five items. Bock et al. (2005) based the items for measuring attitude toward knowledge sharing on Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) attitude theory and corresponding recommendation that attitude be measured using attributes relevant to the subject. The relevant attributes for the five items constructed by Bock et al. (2005) included the participants' evaluations of the goodness, harmfulness, enjoyableness, value, and wisdom of knowledge sharing. Bock

et al. (2005) reported a coefficient alpha estimate of reliability of .92 for scores on the measure. A sample item from Bock et al. (2005) reads: “My knowledge sharing with other organizational members is good” (p. 108). For this study, I replaced the phrase my knowledge sharing with my supervisor’s knowledge sharing; however, the statements otherwise remained intact. Permission from the developer to use the knowledge sharing instrument is included in Appendix A.

Information-Seeking Strategies Scale. Miller (1996) based the Information-Seeking Strategies Scale on seminal work by Miller and Jablin (1991). In constructing the instrument, Miller (1996) initially developed five items for each of the theoretical tactics proposed by Miller and Jablin (1991). Using exploratory factor analysis, Miller (1996) deleted items which did not contribute to a single factor or load equally on any two factors and added items to improve the construct validity of the instrument. Miller (1996) also combined the tactics of observing and surveillance as well as the tactics of indirect inquiry and disguising conversations resulting in a five-factor solution consisting of the information-seeking tactics of (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (e) observing accounted for 59% of the variance (Miller, 1996). The revised Information-Seeking Strategies Scale consisted of 20 items or four items for each of the five information-seeking tactics. Miller (1996) used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (little extent) to 5 (to a very great extent) for each of the items in the scale. As previously stated, Miller (1996) reported a coefficient alpha estimates of reliability of .80, .74, .77, .69, and .80 for the direct inquiry, indirect inquiry/disguising conversations, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing /

surveillance respectively for the scores on the measure. A sample item for direct inquiry reads: “I would ask specific, straight to the point questions to get the information I wanted” (Miller, 1996, p. 8). Permission from the developer to use the Information-Seeking Strategies Scale is also included in Appendix B.

Control Variables

In this study, I measured and controlled for a number of variables. The new employees were asked to report their level of education and the industry sector in which they currently work. As Ojedokun and Idemudia (2014) found that gender influenced attitudes toward knowledge sharing, the demographic variable of gender was measured for the participants. According to Anseel et al. (2015), both organizational tenure and role tenure have been found to influence feedback-seeking behavior negatively. The participants were therefore asked to report the number of weeks or months in their current position, the total number of years of full-time employment, and the total number of years worked in job roles directly related to their current role. Beus et al., (2014) and Chebeghlou and Yusefi (2015) found that education, skill, and experience are important antecedents of newcomers’ organizational socialization; therefore, the participants were also asked to indicate how well their previous education, training, and work experience prepared them for their current job (0 = did not prepare me at all; 10 = prepared me extremely well).

Data Analysis Plan

Data were recorded in an Excel spreadsheet and imported to SPSS software for statistical analysis. The participants were identified by codes rather than by names in

SPSS to maintain anonymity. The data were also cleaned by removing incomplete data, including data that did not include responses to all 20 items measuring information-seeking tactics or to all five of the items measuring perceptions of attitudes toward knowledge sharing. Once the data has been cleaned, the remaining data were merged and analyzed to address the study's research question and related hypotheses.

Research Question: "Is there a relationship between perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing correlated and newcomers' information-seeking tactics of direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing?"

Null Hypothesis 1: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of direct inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Alternative Hypothesis 1: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of direct inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Null Hypothesis 2: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of indirect inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Alternative Hypothesis 2: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of indirect inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Null Hypothesis 3: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of third-party inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Alternative Hypothesis 3: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of third-party inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Null Hypothesis 4: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of testing limits as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Alternative Hypothesis 4: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of testing limits as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Null Hypothesis 5: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of observing as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Alternative Hypothesis 5: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing, as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002), are correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of observing as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale.

Each of the hypotheses was tested using correlation analysis, a statistical technique used to measure the direction and strength of the relationship between the variables (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009). Assumptions for the correlation are that (a) there is a linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables, (b) the variables are approximately normally distributed with no strong outliers, and (c) there is a lack of heteroscedasticity. Assumptions regarding linearity and lack of heteroscedasticity were examined by visual inspection of scatterplots for each independent variable in relation to the dependent variable. The assumption of normality was examined by inspecting histograms for each variable, as well as by examining skewness and kurtosis statistics for each variable. The descriptive statistics are reported in a table showing the means and standard deviations for each of the five information-seeking tactics of direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing.

Threats to Validity

The primary threat to this study's external validity was the use of a convenience sample of new employees from a selection of organizations in the United States limiting generalization of the results to organizations in that geographic location (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Creswell, 2009). Another threat to external validity was the interaction of the setting and the treatment as the results of the study could only be generalized to those employees who have sufficient understanding of and experience with using email, following an online link, and responding to and submitting surveys in an online environment. To address these threats to external validity, any additional studies or experiments will need to be conducted with other populations and in other settings. In the current study, I did not make any statements regarding the generalization of the results beyond the stated samples or organizational settings, as recommended by Creswell (2009).

This study contained several threats to internal validity, including as related to self-report bias, social desirability bias, and researcher bias. By limiting the amount of time that the surveys were available and using coded numbers as opposed to names or other personally-identifiable information, I reduced the impact of the threats to internal validity (Creswell, 2009). Participants not responding or submitting incomplete responses or incomplete matches also posed a threat to internal validity; however, this concern was addressed by the removal of incomplete responses or responses prior to analysis (Cook & Campbell, 1979).

According to Creswell (2009), threats to construct validity occur when a study's variables are inadequately defined or measured. To help maintain construct validity within this study, I utilized the definitions and measures provided by Bock et al. (2005) for knowledge sharing and by Miller and Jablin (1991) for information-seeking. I also included the corresponding 20-items for measuring the five information-seeking tactics of direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing as provided by Miller (1996). According to Miller (1996), the frequency of tactic use changes over time; however, organizational newcomers rely on a variety of information-seeking tactics, especially when the level of uncertainty is high. Therefore, the newcomers were asked to respond to the survey based on situations in which they were very uncertain about a job-related task and motivated to find out the answer from their immediate supervisor. In addition, I utilized the definitions and five-items for measuring attitude toward knowledge sharing provided by Bock et al. (2005). According to Cook and Campbell (1979), attitude as a construct requires consistency across modes of responding and across time for the same respondent. Bock et al. (2005) defined attitudes toward knowledge sharing using the concept of knowledge as an individual resource and Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) research on the connection between an individual's attitudes and his or her intentions and behaviors toward an object.

Ethical Procedures

This study was not expected to lead to any specific ethical dilemmas for the participants or their organizations. There were potential professional and relationship risks, however, due to the recruitment of and data collection from new employees. To

ensure that the participants and their organizations were ethically protected the following precautions were taken. Prior to the start of the study, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approvals were obtained and copies of those approvals with corresponding IRB approval numbers were listed. Neither the participants' names nor any other personally identifiable information was recorded in the summary of results ensuring the anonymity of the data and therefore, confidentiality.

An informed consent statement presented just prior to clicking on the link to begin the study informed participants that their individual responses were confidential. The participants were also informed that only the researcher conducting the study has access to the survey responses. Email address and IP address tracking were also enabled in SurveyMonkey to help ensure one response per participant. A unique identifier was generated for each data set so that no other organizational or personally identifiable information needed to be collected. The informed consent also ensured the participants that their participation in the study was voluntary and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty simply by closing their web browser prior to the submission of the survey. Once the web browser has been closed, however, the participants were not able to return to the survey to modify their responses or resubmit the survey.

Data collected during the study was downloaded from SurveyMonkey to a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet prior to being transferred to SPSS for analysis. Precautions were taken to protect the confidentiality of the data at all phases of the experiment, including through the collection of anonymous data and the storage of the data on a

password-protected computer. SurveyMonkey the online survey platform that was used to collect the data provided a security statement available for review at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/mp/policy/security/> which outlined steps taken to ensure the security of the data collected and stored on its servers. Once downloaded from SurveyMonkey, all research data were stored on my personal computer, which is password-protected and is either on my person or secured at my residence at all times. The corresponding data will be deleted from both my SurveyMonkey account and the related servers, and from my personal computer's hard drive after five years. Access to participants was obtained through SurveyMonkey Audience or through my current work-related community contacts creating the potential for conflicts of interest. To avoid the perception of current or future temptation to use the data to my professional or personal benefit, the data collected was not associated in any way with a particular organization.

Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the research methodology and rationale for using a nonexperimental design to collect and analyze data on the relationship between perception of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing and the information-seeking tactics of newcomers. I described the target population and sampling procedures and outlined the process for collecting data for analysis from the participants. In addition, I restated the research questions and hypotheses, discussed potential threats to validity, and addressed ethical considerations to protect the participants from harm or potential risk. In Chapter 4, I provide the results of the data analysis using correlation analysis to

examine the relationship between information-seeking tactics and attitudes toward knowledge sharing.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

During the first year of employment, newcomers' perceptions of interactions with a supervisor can influence their choice of adjustment behaviors, including their information-seeking behaviors. In keeping with social exchange theory, negative impressions of interactions with a supervisor have been found to result in social conflict (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016), poor performance (Srikanth & Jomon, 2013), and withdrawal behaviors (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). In addition, newcomer's perceptions have been shown to strongly influence their voluntary turnover intention (Akremi et al., 2014; Allen & Shanock, 2013; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013). The purpose of this quantitative correlational study was to examine the effect that perceptions of supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing have on five information-seeking tactics used by organizational newcomers including (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (e) observing. In Chapter 4, I summarize the data collection steps and results of the study, as well as provide a description of the participants.

Data Collection

For this study, survey data were collected over a 2-month period from March 2019 to May 2019. A total of 1,265 individuals from the target population participated in the online survey created in and distributed through SurveyMonkey, out of whom 14% ($n = 179$) met the criteria for including in the data analysis. I accessed the majority of the participants using SurveyMonkey Audience, a select panel of individuals from the United

States who had volunteered to participate in online surveys. Participants were not asked to provide their state of residence; however, using SurveyMonkey Audience was assumed to have expanded the scope of my study to participants outside of the State of Indiana, which was different from the original data collection plan. Nine respondents (less than 1%) accessed the survey through social media. Among the respondents, 179 individuals met all of the participation criteria and responded to all 20 items in the information-seeking section of the survey and all five items in the knowledge sharing section of the survey. There were 1,086 individuals who either self-identified as not meeting one or more of the criteria or who did not complete one or more of the survey questions.

Sample Demographics

The sample ($n = 179$) was comprised of employees who self-identified as being at least 18 years of age with less than one year of organizational tenure in a non-supervisory role at the time of the survey. The sample was representative of the overall population and comprised of individuals (25% male, 74.4% female) from all over the United States. Table 2 shows the frequency counts and percentages for the sample's characteristics.

Table 2

Frequency Counts and Percentages for Participants (N = 179)

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|---------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Current industry | | |
| Life-sciences | 24 | 13.4% |
| Advanced manufacturing | 12 | 6.7% |
| Information technology | 7 | 3.9% |
| Supply Chain | 20 | 11.2% |
| Education | 34 | 19% |
| Other industry | 71 | 39.7% |
| Prefer not to answer | 9 | 5% |
| No response | 2 | 1.1% |
| Gender | | |
| Male | 43 | 24% |
| Female | 134 | 74.9% |
| Prefer not to answer | 2 | 1.1% |
| Level of Education | | |
| Less than high school | 1 | 0.6% |
| High school or equivalent | 34 | 19% |
| Some college, no degree | 50 | 27.9% |
| Associate degree | 23 | 12.8% |

(table continues)

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Bachelor's degree | 54 | 30.2% |
| Master's degree | 14 | 7.8% |
| Doctorate | 2 | 1.1% |
| No response | 1 | 0.6% |
| Years employed full-time* | | |
| Less than one year | 90 | 50.3% |
| 1 to 3 years | 19 | 10.6% |
| 4 to 6 years | 16 | 8.9% |
| 6+ years | 53 | 29.6% |
| No response | 1 | 0.6% |
| Years in related roles | | |
| No experience at all | 33 | 18.4% |
| Less than one year | 60 | 33.5% |
| 1 to 3 years | 32 | 17.9% |
| 4 to 6 years | 17 | 9.5% |
| 6+ years | 35 | 19.6% |
| No response | 2 | 1.1% |
| Prior preparation for current job | | |
| Did not prepare me at all | 18 | 10.1% |
| Prepared me a little | 24 | 13.4% |

(table continues)

| <u>Variable</u> | <u>N</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Prepared me well | 52 | 29.1% |
| Prepared me extremely well | 45 | 25.1% |
| No response | 1 | 0.6% |

Note. * Years employed full-time not necessarily at current job

Tests of Assumptions

In this study, I used correlational analysis to measure the nature of the relationship between perceptions of knowledge sharing (the predictor variable) and each of five information-seeking tactics (the criterion variables) used by new employees. Because Pearson correlations and simple linear regression provide similar information concerning the magnitude of relationships between variables and are based on similar sets of assumptions, initially I also conducted simple linear regression analyses to assess the validity of the statistical assumptions required to apply correlational analysis. Prior to conducting the main analyses, I examined the data and tested the related statistical assumptions including for linearity, independence of residuals, normality, and homoscedasticity.

To determine if the data met the assumption of linearity, I first visually inspected the scatterplots of the predictor variable versus each of the criterion variables. The scatterplots are presented in Figures C1-C5 (see Appendix C). Each scatterplot includes a locally weighted smoothing (LOESS) line to help better visualize the relationship between the two variables. Based on the scatterplots, knowledge sharing and direct inquiry have a positive relationship. Knowledge sharing and each of the remaining four

criterion variables (indirect inquiry, third-part inquiry, testing limits, and observing) have a negative relationship. All of the scatterplots were either monotone increasing or monotone decreasing indicating that the data sets meet the assumption of linearity.

Regression analysis also requires independence of residuals or errors. In this study, I assumed the responses to be independent as the participants came from various industries and organizations across the United States and were thus not likely to be aware of each other's participation in the survey. To expose any trends or patterns in the data, however, I used the Durbin-Watson statistic to test for independence of residuals for each variable. An acceptable range for the Durbin-Watson statistic is 0 to 4 with 1.5 to 2.5 considered normal (Howard & Workman, 2007). According to the Durbin-Watson statistics (see Table 3), all of the sample data met the assumption of independence of errors for the five linear regression models.

Table 3

| <i>Durbin-Watson Statistic for Simple Linear Regression</i> | |
|---|---------------|
| Variable | Durbin-Watson |
| Direct inquiry | 1.99 |
| Indirect inquiry | 1.94 |
| Third-party inquiry | 1.92 |
| Testing limits | 2.20 |
| Observing | 1.93 |

According to Kim (2013), parametric tests such as correlation and regression also require assessment of the assumption of normality to ensure that the mean value used in the analyses is representative of the data set. The assumption is that the residuals from the regression model are normally distributed. I tested the assumption of normality both graphically and numerically. To graphically test for normality, I first inspected the

quantile-quantile plots or Q-Q plots for each distribution in the study. In regression analysis, quantile-quantile plots are created by plotting the quantiles of the observed value of the response variable on one axis and the quantiles of the expected values of the standard normal distribution on the other axis (Loy, Follett, & Hofmann, 2016). The Q-Q plots (see Figures D6 - D10) for each of the residuals for the regression are presented in Appendix D. According to Loy et al. (2016), to interpret the distribution as normal the data points must fall on or close to the reference line. The Q-Q plots for direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, and observing show that the sample distribution of data points approximately aligns to the reference normal distribution with some deviations at the ends of the distribution. The Q-Q plot for testing limits shows that the quantiles for the sample distribution do not align with values expected for a normal distribution, which indicates that the data is not normally distributed.

To numerically check for violation of the normality assumption, I examined the skewness and kurtosis of the residuals from the regression analysis. Skewness and kurtosis statistics are numerical assessments of normality. Skewness is a measure of the symmetry as in if the data is skewed toward one and or the other side of the distribution. Kurtosis is a measure of the flatness or peakedness of a distribution (Kim, 2013). The skewness and kurtosis statistics are presented in Table 4. According to Meyers, Garnst, and Guarino (2013), skewness and kurtosis values that exceed 0.5 in absolute value are indicative of departures from a normal distribution. The skewness statistics for direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, and third-party inquiry show that those distributions are somewhat skewed; however, the distribution for observing does not appear skewed.

Testing limits is however highly skewed. The kurtosis for direct inquiry and testing limits show that those distributions are kurtotic; however, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, and observing are not kurtotic.

The normality test results using skewness and kurtosis statistics were confirmed by a z-test. The z value is calculated by dividing the skewness or kurtosis values by their standard errors. For a medium-sized sample ($50 \leq n < 300$), a z value between ± 3.29 means that the data does not strongly deviate from normality (Kim, 2013). The z-values for each of the variables are listed in Table 4. The z values for direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, and third-party inquiry confirm those distributions are slightly skewed. Once again, the distribution for observing does not appear skewed; however, testing limits is highly skewed. The z-value test also confirms that the distributions for indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, and observing are not kurtotic. Using this test, direct inquiry does not appear to be kurtotic; however, testing limits is once again highly kurtotic.

Table 4

Normality Testing Skewness and Kurtosis z Values for Study Variables

| | Skewness | | Kurtosis | |
|---------------------|-----------|---------|-----------|---------|
| | Statistic | Z-Value | Statistic | Z-Value |
| Direct inquiry | -.66 | -3.62 | 1.05 | 2.91 |
| Indirect inquiry | .82 | 4.49 | .12 | .36 |
| Third-party inquiry | .72 | 3.96 | .30 | .828 |
| Testing limits | 2.05 | 11.30 | 4.73 | 13.10 |
| Observing | .39 | 2.13 | .32 | .890 |

To test for homoscedasticity, I examined the plots of the residuals versus the predicted values for each of the criterion variables. According to Rosopa, Schaffer, and Schroeder (2013), if the data is homoscedastic, the spread of the residuals around the

horizontal line ($Y = 0$) will be relatively constant for all values of the predictor variable. Based on this criteria, all of the residual plots (see Appendix E. Figures E11-E15) indicated that the data sets meet the assumption of homoscedasticity.

All of the study variables met the assumptions of linearity, independence of residuals, and homoscedasticity. However, not all of the assumptions for linear regression were met. The distribution for testing limits violated the assumption of normality as indicated by interpretation of the Q-Q plots and examination of the skewness or kurtosis statistics. The testing limits data were highly skewed and highly kurtotic or leptokurtic. Therefore, I examined all of the variable relationships for the five main analyses as well as for the two subsets using the Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient. Spearman's correlation is a suitable non-parametric alternative to Pearson's correlation. Unlike the Pearson correlation, the Spearman's correlation requires only a monotonic relationship between continuous variables. Spearman correlation does not involve any assumptions regarding the normal distribution of the variables (Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009).

In this study, I used an ordinal Likert scale, however I treated the variables as continuous. In addition, all of the variable relationships met the assumption of linearity and were either monotone increasing or monotone decreasing as indicated in the scatterplots located Appendix C. The results for the main analyses and the subsets of data based on years of full-time employment and education using the Spearman's Rank correlation coefficient are below.

Results

The research question for this study was: “Is there a relationship between perception of supervisors’ attitudes towards knowledge sharing correlated and newcomers’ information-seeking tactics of direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing?” The five null hypotheses stated that there would be no relationship between newcomers’ perceptions of supervisors’ attitudes towards knowledge sharing and each of the information-seeking tactics of (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (e) observing. Descriptive statistics, including means and standard deviations, as well as the correlations coefficients for the measured variables of knowledge sharing and the five information-seeking tactics, are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Correlation Coefficients and Descriptive Statistics for Measured Variables (N = 179)

| | Mean | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|------------------------|------|------|--------|--------|-------|-------|-------|---|
| 1. Knowledge sharing | 3.46 | 0.63 | - | | | | | |
| 2. Direct inquiry | 4.22 | 0.69 | .46** | - | | | | |
| 3. Indirect inquiry | 2.27 | 1.09 | -.17* | -.26** | - | | | |
| 4. Third-party inquiry | 2.28 | 1.03 | -.32** | -.37** | .69** | - | | |
| 5. Testing limits | 1.46 | 0.9 | -.39** | -.31** | .51** | .48** | - | |
| 6. Observing | 2.61 | 0.9 | -.20* | -.20** | .51** | .58** | .50** | - |

Note. Correlation examined using Spearman’s Rho

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed)

The first null hypothesis for this study stated: Perception of supervisors’ attitudes towards knowledge sharing as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002) are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of direct inquiry as measured by Miller’s (1996) Information-

Seeking Strategies Scale. The results of the test were statistically significant, $r_s(177) = .46, p < .001$, two-tailed. There is a relationship between newcomers' perceptions of their supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes and the newcomers' use of the information-seeking tactic of direct inquiry.

The second null hypothesis for this study stated: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002) are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of indirect inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale. The results of this test were also statistically significant, $r_s(177) = -.17, p = .022$, two-tailed. There is a relationship between newcomers' perceptions of their supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes and the newcomer's information-seeking tactic of indirect inquiry.

The third null hypothesis for this study stated: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002) are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of third-party inquiry as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale. The results of this test were also statistically significant, $r_s(177) = -.32, p < .001$, two-tailed. There is a relationship between newcomers' perceptions of their third-party supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes and the newcomer's information-seeking tactic of third-party inquiry. Newcomers tend to seek less information from third-parties when they perceive that their supervisors have a positive attitude toward knowledge sharing.

The fourth null hypothesis for this study stated: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002) are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of testing limits as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale. The results of this test were also statistically significant, $r_s(177) = -.39, p < .001$, two-tailed. There is a relationship between newcomers' perceptions of their supervisor's knowledge-sharing attitudes and the information-seeking tactic of testing limits. Newcomers with positive perceptions of their supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes tend to rely less on testing limits as an information-seeking tactic.

The fifth null hypothesis for this study stated: Perception of supervisors' attitudes towards knowledge sharing as measured by an Attitude Towards Knowledge Sharing Scale developed by Bock and Kim (2002) are not correlated with the newcomer information-seeking tactic of observing as measured by Miller's (1996) Information-Seeking Strategies Scale. Once again, the results of the test were statistically significant $r_s(177) = -.20, p = .011$, two-tailed. There is a relationship between newcomers' perceptions of attitudes toward knowledge sharing and the information-seeking tactic of observing.

Additional Analyses for Full-Time Employment and Level of Education Subsets

In this study, participants also identified their number of years employed full-time (not necessarily at the current employer) and their level of education. As previously mentioned, both organizational tenure and role tenure have been found to influence

feedback-seeking behavior (Anseel et al., 2015). In addition, Chebeghlou and Yusefi (2015) found that education as a reflection of both skill and experience is an important factor in successful newcomer socialization. To better understand how years employed full-time and education level influenced the relationship between perceptions of knowledge sharing and each of the information-seeking tactics, I split the data into subsets and ran additional statistical analyses on each. For years employed full-time, I defined the two subsets as (a) less than one year employed full-time ($n = 90$) and (b) more than one year employed full-time ($n = 88$). For education level, I defined the two subsets as (a) having less than a bachelor's degree ($n = 108$) and (b) having a bachelor's degree or higher ($n = 70$). The results of the additional analyses are discussed below and presented in Tables 6 and 7.

Table 6

Correlation Coefficients for Full-Time Employment Subsets

| Predictor variable | Employment subsets | Criterion variables | | | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------|
| | | Direct inquiry | Indirect inquiry | Third-party inquiry | Testing limits | Observing |
| Knowledge sharing | Full-time ≤ 1 year ($n = 90$) | .51** | -.07 | -.26* | -.25* | -.09 |
| | Full-time > 1 year ($n = 88$) | .39** | -.34** | -.38** | -.56** | -.28** |

Note. Correlation examined using Spearman's Rho

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level

Analyses for full-time employment subset. For both full-employment subgroups, there were statistically significant Spearman correlation coefficients in regard to the relationships of knowledge sharing with direct inquiry, third-party inquiry, and testing limits. Within the subset of participants who had been employed full-time for

more than a year, the Spearman correlation coefficients were statistically significant for in regard to the relationships of knowledge sharing with indirect inquiry and with observing. However, within the subset of participants who had been employed full-time for a year or less, the Spearman correlation coefficients were not statistically significant for in regard to the relationships of knowledge sharing with indirect inquiry and with observing.

Table 7

Correlation Coefficients for Education Level Subset

| Predictor variable | Education subsets | Criterion Variables | | | | |
|--------------------|--|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|----------------|-----------|
| | | Direct inquiry | Indirect Inquiry | Third-Party Inquiry | Testing Limits | Observing |
| Knowledge sharing | Less than bachelors (<i>n</i> = 108) | .46** | -.09 | -.28** | -.35** | -.21* |
| | Bachelors and higher (<i>n</i> = 70) | .42** | -.32** | -.36** | -.45** | -.14 |

Note. Correlation examined using Spearman's Rho

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level

* Correlation is significant at the .05 level

Analyses for level of education subsets. For both education level subgroups, there were statistically significant Spearman correlation coefficients with regard to the relationships of knowledge sharing with direct inquiry, third-party inquiry, and testing limits. For the subset of participants with less than a bachelor's degree, the Spearman correlation coefficient was also statistically significant with regard to the relationship of knowledge sharing with observing. However, the Spearman correlation coefficient was not statistically significant for the relationship of knowledge sharing with indirect inquiry. For the subset of participants with a bachelor's degree or higher, the Spearman

correlation coefficient was statistically significant for the relationship of knowledge sharing with indirect inquiry; however, the Spearman correlation coefficient was not statistically significant with regard to the relationship of knowledge sharing to observing.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between newcomers' perceptions of their supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing and newcomers' use of the five information-seeking tactics of (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (e) observing. Correlational analysis indicated a significant positive correlation between perceptions of knowledge-sharing attitudes and the newcomer information-seeking tactic of direct inquiry. Correlation analysis also indicated a significant inverse relationship between perceptions of knowledge-sharing attitudes and the newcomer information-seeking tactics of indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing. Additional analyses on subsets of participants based on number of years employed full-time and level of education yielded similar results with positive relationships for knowledge sharing and direct inquiry for all subsets. Correlation analysis also indicated inverse relationships for third-party inquiry and testing limits for all subsets. There was however no relationship between knowledge sharing and indirect inquiry for participants with less than one year full-time employment or with less than a bachelor's degree. There was also no relationship for observing for participants with less than one year full-time employment or with a bachelor's degree or higher. In Chapter 5, I discuss the interpretation of the findings and the related limitations

of the study. I also discuss the methodological, theoretical, and practical implications of the study and make recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

During the first year of employment, new employees must acquire organizational knowledge from their supervisors that will allow them to integrate into the workplace successfully (Anseel et al., 2015; Schaubroeck et al., 2013; Swart et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2014). This transfer of knowledge which can be incidental or part of planned socialization activities occurs over multiple social interactions (Akremi et al., 2014; Lapointe et al., 2014; Wu & Lee, 2016). Previous researchers have not, however, examined the impact of knowledge-sharing attitudes on newcomers' specific information-seeking strategies. The purpose of this quantitative study was to examine the relationship between newcomers' perceptions of their supervisor's knowledge-sharing attitudes and the five information-seeking behaviors, including (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (b) observing. The results of the Spearman correlation coefficient analysis indicated a significant positive correlation between perceptions of knowledge-sharing attitudes and the newcomer information-seeking tactic of direct inquiry. The Spearman correlation coefficients also indicated significant inverse relationships between perceptions of knowledge-sharing attitudes and the newcomer information-seeking tactics of indirect inquiry, third-party-inquiry, testing limits, and observing. Additional Spearman correlation coefficient analyses on subsets of participants based on number of years employed full-time and level of education yielded similar results with the exception of indirect inquiry with no relationship to knowledge sharing for participants with less than one year full-time

employment or with less than a bachelor's degree or for observing for participants with less than one year full-time employment or with a bachelor's degree or higher.. This chapter includes an interpretation of the results of the study, as well as a discussion on the study's limitations. This chapter also includes recommendation for future research and potential implications for positive social change.

Interpretation of the Findings

Researchers have previously examined various antecedents and outcomes for both knowledge sharing and information-seeking; however, Yan and Davison (2013) conducted the only study that simultaneously examined knowledge seeking and knowledge-sharing behaviors. The results of this study addressed that gap, as well as contributed to existing research on newcomer information-seeking and shed further light on the role of supervisor's knowledge sharing in new employee socialization and adjustment during the first year of employment. In this study, I found evidence of a statistically significant relationship between knowledge sharing and each of the five information-seeking tactics specified by Miller (1996) including a statistically significant positive correlation for direct inquiry and statistically significant negative correlations for (a) indirect inquiry, (b) third-party inquiry, (c) testing limits, and (d) observing. I also examined the relationship between knowledge sharing and the five information-seeking tactics for subsets of participants based on years of full-time employment and on level of education. The strength of the statistical relationships for the main analysis and each of the subsets varied by tactic; however, the results aligned with and added to previous research on both knowledge sharing and information-seeking behaviors.

Hypothesis 1

For Hypothesis 1, I examined the correlation between newcomer perception of supervisor knowledge sharing and the information-seeking tactic of direct inquiry. The statistically significant positive result for Hypothesis 1 was consistent with previous research which emphasized the reciprocal nature of knowledge exchange; an important social interaction between supervisors and new employees during organizational socialization. According to Cohen's (1992) heuristic criteria for interpreting the magnitude of a relationship, the observed correlation coefficient ($r_s = 0.46$) for Hypothesis 1 suggested a medium- to large-sized relationship between perceptions of knowledge sharing and direct inquiry. This result is not surprising. According to social exchange theory, both supervisor's and newcomer's evaluation of the benefits and costs influence the frequency of their workplace interactions (Homans, 1958). Expectations of positive outcomes, including those with perceived value, were found to increase the frequency of interaction (Homans, 1974). According to previous research, perceptions of reciprocal benefits have a positive influence on knowledge-sharing attitudes (Chennamaneni et al., 2012). Supervisors with positive knowledge-sharing attitudes build trust (Hsu & Chang, 2014; Shu & Chuang, 2011), which Choi et al. (2014) found positively impacted newcomer's direct feedback-seeking from supervisors.

When studying the influence of newcomer socialization on uncertainty reduction and trust in supervisors, Lapointe et al. (2014) recommended targeting newcomers with less than one year (2 to 3 months) of tenure. For this study, I went one step further examining the relationship between newcomer's perceptions of knowledge sharing and

the information-seeking tactic of direct inquiry for subsets of participants based on overall years of full-time employment. The subsets included (a) those who had been employed full-time one year or less and (b) those employed full-time for more than one year though not necessarily at the current organization. The observed correlation coefficient ($r_s = .51$) suggested a large-sized relationship between knowledge sharing and direct inquiry for participants who have worked full-time for one year or less (Cohen, 1992). Participants who were new to full-time employment potentially recognized the benefits of directly engaging with supervisors during their first year of employment. The result was also consistent with previous research by Hays and Williams (2014) which indicated that the perceived value of the information as well as trust in the supervisor positively influenced feedback seeking behavior. For the subset of participants who reported having worked full-time for more than one year, the observed correlation coefficient ($r_s = .39$) suggested only a medium-size relationship (Cohen, 1992). This slightly weaker relationship was a little surprising given that Zhang et al. (2014) found that the higher supervisor support over time the more likely the newcomer to engage in proactive behaviors such as information-seeking. This result is, however, consistent with previous meta-analytic research by Anseel et al., (2015) which found that both organizational and job tenure are negatively correlated to feedback-seeking.

Full-time employment tenure is not the only factor with the potential to influence direct inquiry as a proactive information-seeking behavior. Previous research has found that new employees' prior knowledge as acquired through formal education or on-the-job training positively influenced information seeking and the willingness to adopt the

knowledge received (Chirawattanakij & Ractham, 2016). In addition, Cho (2013) found that learning goal orientation or the intrinsic motivation to develop and learn new skills positively predicted feedback seeking directly from a supervisor. Confirming the earlier research, the observed correlation coefficients in this study suggested a medium- to large-sized relationship both for participants with less than a bachelor's degree ($r_s = .46$) and for those with a bachelor's degree or higher ($r_s = .42$) (Cohen, 1992).

Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2 examined the correlation between newcomers' perceptions of supervisors' knowledge sharing and the information-seeking tactic of indirect inquiry. The result for Hypothesis 2 showed an inverse relationship which is consistent with previous research. The observed correlation coefficient ($r_s = -.17$) showed a small- to medium-sized relationship between the variables (Cohen, 1992). According to Miller and Jablin (1991), direct and indirect inquiry are both active information-seeking tactics; however, indirect inquiry is a covert strategy which relies on hinting or joking instead of asking directly. According to social exchange theory, information seeking by indirect inquiry has social costs for both the supervisor and the new employee (Homans, 1974). New employees however tend to focus more on the benefits than the costs of information seeking (Cooper-Thomas & Stadler, 2015). Therefore, new employees who use indirect inquiry may believe that the benefits outweigh the costs, especially when compared to direct inquiry (Hays & Williams, 2014). The result suggested however that newcomers may over-estimate the benefits of using indirect inquiry. In fact, Hsu and Chang (2014)

noted that indirect inquiry creates uncertainty over the consequences and thus have a negative or the opposite impact on supervisor's knowledge-sharing behavior.

For Hypothesis 2, I also examined the relationship between perceptions of knowledge sharing and the information-seeking tactic of indirect inquiry for subsets of participants including (a) those who reported having worked full-time less than one year and (b) those who reported having worked full-time for more than one year. In this study, there was no statistical evidence to suggest that the knowledge sharing perceptions of participants with less than one year of full-time employment impacted their use of indirect inquiry. As previously mentioned, indirect inquiry is risky from a social exchange perspective (Homans, 1958, 1974); therefore, it is also not surprising that someone new to full-time employment would avoid using the tactic. The inverse relationship was however statistically significant for participants with more than one year of full-time employment. The correlations coefficient ($r_s = -.34$); showed a medium-sized relationship (Cohen, 1992).

According to Chebeghlou and Yusefi (2015), education as an aspect of skill and experience contributed to effective newcomer socialization. For the subset of participants with less than a bachelor's degree, the relationship between perceptions of knowledge sharing and indirect inquiry was however not significant. The strength of the relationship between knowledge sharing and indirect inquiry for the subset of participants with a bachelor's degree or higher was medium-sized ($r_s = -.32$) (Cohen, 1992). The difference in the education-based subsets could be attributed to the positive relationship that Lee et al., (2015) found between supervisor's knowledge sharing and their employees' learning

orientation. In accordance with social exchange theory (Homans, 1974), individuals with a higher learning orientation, as demonstrated through higher educational attainment, would see a greater benefit versus cost to direct as opposed to indirect information seeking from supervisors (Lee et al., 2015; Miller & Jablin, 1991).

Hypothesis 3

The result for Hypothesis 3, which examined the correlation between newcomers' perceptions of supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes and the information-seeking tactic of third-party inquiry, showed an inverse relationship. As newcomer perception of supervisor knowledge sharing increased, third-party inquiry tended to decrease. The observed correlation coefficient for Hypothesis 3 ($r_s = -.032$) showed a medium-sized relationship between perceptions of knowledge sharing and third-party inquiry (Cohen, 1992). The result was consistent with previous research on third-party or secondary sources of information for new employees. According to Miller and Jablin (1991), coworkers are the most likely third-party resource for new employees. For newcomers and supervisors, the benefits of third-party knowledge sharing included positive correlations to self-evaluated task mastery (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016) and to supervisor-evaluated task performance (Kim & Yun, 2015; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016). Supervisors remained however the primary information source for new employees especially when third-party sources provided negative or conflicting feedback (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016).

For Hypothesis 3, the inverse relationship between perceptions of knowledge sharing and third-party inquiry were also statistically significant for both subsets of participants based on number of years of full-time employment. The correlation

coefficients ($r_s = -.26$) for participants with one year or less of full-time employment showed a small-sized relationship; however, the correlation coefficient ($r_s = -.38$) for those participants with more than one year of full-time employment was medium-sized. This could be explained by the previous research. Srikanth and Jomon (2013) found that feedback from supervisors was more effective in reducing role ambiguity than feedback received from coworkers or other third-party sources. According to Miller (1996), third-party inquiry while less frequently used is however a viable alternative to direct or indirect inquiry as it carries fewer social costs.

The results of this study showed statistically significant inverse relationships between perceptions of knowledge sharing and third-party inquiry for both subsets of participants based on level of education. The observed correlation coefficients for the participants with less than a bachelor's degree ($r_s = -.28$) showed a small -sized relationship and for the participants with a bachelor's degree or higher ($r_s = -.36$) showed a medium-sized relationship (Cohen, 1992). These results suggested that new employees with less than a Bachelor's degree place slightly more emphasis on third-party inquiry as an information-seeking tactic than employees with a bachelor's degree or higher. The strength of the relationship for both subsets is such however that perceptions of knowledge sharing by supervisors inversely impacted third-party inquiry.

Hypothesis 4

Hypothesis 4, which examined the correlation between newcomers' perceptions of supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes and the information-seeking tactic of testing limits, showed an inverse relationship. The observed correlation coefficient ($r_s = -.39$)

suggested a medium- to large-sized relationship between perceptions of knowledge sharing and testing limits (Cohen, 1992). Previous research on testing limits as a specific information-seeking strategy used by newcomers is sparse; therefore, this study primarily served the purpose of adding to that limited body of knowledge. According to Miller and Jablin (1991), testing limits involved the newcomer purposely provoking a response from the knowledge holder (i.e., supervisor). Previous research has shown that the strength, quality, and frequency of social interaction is positively correlated to interpersonal trust, which has been shown to be positively correlated with feedback seeking (Anseel et al., 2015) and knowledge sharing (Hsu & Chang, 2014). Testing limits as a confrontational approach to information-seeking (Miller & Jablin, 1991) has social costs for both the newcomer and supervisor due to the reciprocal nature of their interactions during socialization (Homans, 1974).

For the relationship between perceptions of knowledge sharing and testing limits, the results for the subset of participants with one year or less of full-time employment and for those participants with more than one year of full-time employment were also statistically significant. The observed correlation coefficients showed a small- to medium-sized relationship ($r_s = -.25$) for participants with one year or less of full-time employment and a large -sized relationship ($r_s = -.56$) for those with more than one year of full-time employment. These results are surprising given that testing limits is a potentially risky information-seeking tactic, especially for new employees (Miller, 1996; Miller & Jablin, 1991). Although there is an inverse relationship between perceptions of knowledge sharing and testing limits during the first year of full-time employment, the

strength of that relationship was considerably lower than for those participants who had previously been employed full-time for more than a year. This result suggested that at some point during their first year of full-time employment likely due to benefit cost analysis, the information-seeking tactic of testing limits becomes more strongly tied to perceptions of supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes and behaviors.

The results of the correlation analysis for the information-seeking tactic of testing limits for the subset of participants who reported having less than a bachelor's degree were statistically significant. The observed correlation coefficient ($r_s = -.35$) showed a medium-sized relationship. The results of the correlation analysis for the subset of participants who reported having a bachelor's degree or higher were also statistically significant with an observed correlation coefficient ($r_s = -.45$) showing a large-sized relationship. As with those participants with more than one year of full-time employment, having a bachelor's degree or higher increased the strength of the inverse relationship between perceptions of knowledge sharing and testing limits.

Hypothesis 5

For Hypothesis 5, the statistically significant results of this study showed an inverse correlation between newcomers' perceptions of supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes and the information-seeking tactic of observing. The correlation coefficient ($r_s = -0.20$) suggested, however, a small- to medium-sized relationship between perceptions of knowledge sharing and observing (Cohen, 1992). Observing is a covert information-seeking tactic (Miller & Jablin, 1991). Observing is seen as closely related to the feedback-seeking tactic of monitoring as identified by Ashford and Cummings (1983)

(Cooper-Thomas & Stadler, 2015; Srikanth & Jomon, 2013). According to Miller and Jablin (1991), a supervisor is likely to be aware of a newcomer's observing. From a social exchange perspective, Ashford (1986) determined that the more valuable the information to the newcomer, the more frequent the monitoring behavior (Homans, 1974).

For the test on perceptions of supervisor's knowledge sharing and observing, the results for the subset of participants with one year or less of full-time employment were not statistically significant. This is surprising considering that observing is a relatively low risk information-seeking tactic because depending on the awareness of the knowledge holder observing is neither an entirely overt nor entirely covert strategy (Miller, 1996). The results of the correlation analysis for the subset of participants with more than one year of full-time employment were however statistically significant. Based on the observed correlation coefficient ($r_s = -.28$), having more than one year of full-time employment tenure appeared to have only a small- to medium-sized effect (Cohen, 1992) on the relationship between newcomers' perceptions of supervisors' knowledge sharing and the information-seeking tactic of observing.

For the correlation analysis between perceptions of knowledge sharing and observing, the results for the subset of participants who reported having less than a bachelor's degree were statistically significant. The observed correlation coefficient ($r_s = -.21$) was only medium-sized (Cohen, 1992). The results of the correlation analysis for the subset of participants who reported having a bachelor's degree or higher showed no relationship between attitudes toward knowledge sharing and the information-seeking

tactic of observing. This result was inconsistent with previous research by Cho (2013) which found that a higher learning goal orientation as would potentially be reflected in a higher level of formal education positively influenced information-seeking via monitoring or observing of a supervisor.

Implications

This study has methodological, theoretical, and practical implications. The methodological implications are related to the use of five information-seeking tactics as identified by Miller (1996) as opposed to relying exclusively on the tactics of direct inquiry and observing (Ashford & Cummings, 1981, 1983) as has been prevalent in prior research. The theoretical implications involve the use of the propositions of social exchange theory as outlined by Homans (1974) to describe and interpret the behaviors of the supervisor and the newcomer. The practical implications expand upon the theoretical implications and speak further to the reciprocal nature of the relationship between a supervisor and a new employee, specifically during the first year of employment. Consequently, the results of this study have practical implications for new employees, supervisors, organizations, and communities.

Methodological Implications

An important methodological implication of this study was in regard to the use of Miller's (1996) conceptualization of five of the seven newcomer information-seeking tactics identified by Miller and Jablin (1991). According to Anseel et al. (2015), it is important for researchers to examine different dimensions of feedback-seeking variables, as opposed to relying exclusively on direct inquiry and observing as representative of all

overt and covert tactics, respectively. Early research on new employees' feedback-seeking behavior primarily used a general measure or only differentiated between active (i.e., direct) inquiry and monitoring (i.e., observing) behaviors (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford & Cummings, 1981, 1983). As such, the information-seeking tactics of direct inquiry and observing have been examined extensively within the newcomer socialization and workplace-related literature. For example, Cho (2013) found that employees' motivation to learn influenced both direct inquiry and observing of supervisors. In addition, Srikanth and Jomon (2013) found that new employees' direct inquiry and observing behaviors from both supervisors and coworkers moderated the relationship between role ambiguity and role performance. A meta-analysis by Anseel et al. (2015) later found, however, that inquiry and monitoring are not interchangeable concepts. To account for these differences, I ran five separate analyses when examining the relationship between knowledge-sharing attitudes and each of the information-seeking tactics.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this study on the correlation of newcomers' perceptions of supervisors' knowledge sharing to information-seeking tactics supported social exchange theory. According to Homans (1958, 1974), behaviors during a social interaction are psychologically motivated by both parties' evaluations of the benefits and costs of engagement. Within this study, newcomers' perceptions of supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes were found to have positively impacted newcomer's direct inquiry from supervisors (Hypothesis 1). Further analysis revealed similar strong relationships between

knowledge sharing and direct inquiry for the subset of participants with one year or less of full-time employment experience and for those with less than a bachelor's degree. The strength of the relationship diminished slightly but remained strong overall for those new employees with more than one year of full-time employment and for those who had earned higher than a bachelor's degree. These results are consistent with social exchange theory's success proposition or expectation of a positive outcome based on behaviors that have led to positive outcomes in the past (Homans, 1974). New employees tend to focus more on benefits than costs when seeking information from supervisors (Cooper-Thomas & Stadler, 2015). In keeping with the value proposition of social exchange theory, newcomers are therefore likely to continue using direct inquiry as long as the social benefits of doing so continue to outweigh the social costs (emotional proposition) (Homans, 1974).

In regard to Hypotheses 2 through 5, I found inverse correlations between supervisor's knowledge-sharing attitudes and each of the information-seeking tactics of indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing. Whereas expectation of a successful outcome based on an evaluation of the social benefits appeared to have motivated the use of direct inquiry (Hypothesis 1), the assumption of higher relative costs may have driven the inverse results for Hypotheses 2 through 5 from a social exchange perspective. For example, the small to medium inverse relationships between supervisor's knowledge-sharing attitudes and the information-seeking tactics of indirect inquiry (Hypothesis 2) and observing (Hypothesis 5) indicated that there might have initially been an expectation of a successful outcome (success proposition; Homans, 1974).

Consistent with the value proposition of social exchange theory, participants appeared however to rely less on these covert information-seeking tactics in response to supervisor knowledge-sharing attitudes; possibly due to the perceived negative consequences of less direct social interactions (Homans, 1974). The lack of a relationship between attitudes toward knowledge sharing and indirect inquiry and the lack of a statistical significant relationship between supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes and the information-seeking tactic of observing for the subsets of participants with one year or less of full-time employment experience further supported this conclusion.

As per the value proposition of social exchange theory (Homans, 1974), newcomers' evaluations of the social costs may have also influenced the result for Hypothesis 3 which found an inverse correlation between supervisor knowledge sharing and the information-seeking tactic of third-party inquiry. However, given that Srikanth and Jomon (2013) found that feedback seeking from coworkers was less useful than feedback-seeking from supervisors when it came to reducing uncertainty and role ambiguity, it is likely that the newcomer's use of third-party inquiry would not continue over the long-term. Though it is impossible to predict without further study, the newcomer's perception of the value of the outcome of third-party inquiry may, as a result, diminish over time which is in keeping with the deprivation-satiation proposition of social exchange theory. The inverse result for Hypothesis 4, which examined the correlation between supervisor's knowledge sharing and the information-seeking tactic of testing limits, was also consistent with social exchange theory. The provocative nature of testing limits which involves the newcomer purposely breaking the rules or flouting

workplace norms to elicit a response from the supervisor is, however, a risky strategy. As previously noted, the reciprocal nature of social interaction means that as the newcomer is evaluating the supervisor's behaviors and responding according to the perceived benefits and costs, the supervisor is also evaluating the newcomer and acting accordingly. Behavior intended to provoke a response may have negative consequences for the newcomer. For example, a supervisor may decide to limit or even stop interactions with a newcomer if the costs of a negative engagement outweigh the benefits (emotional proposition) from the supervisor's perspective (Homans, 1974).

Limitations of the Study

Some of the limitations of this study, including the use of a convenience sample, and the potential for self-selection bias, self-reporting bias, and researcher bias were discussed in Chapter 1. Convenience sampling may have impacted the external validity of the study as the sample although easier to access was not necessarily representative of the entire population. In addition, self-selection and self-reporting bias may have impacted the internal validity of the study results as data collection was limited to individuals who had indicated to Survey Monkey that they were willing to participate in online survey. Although Survey Monkey assured that the sample was representative of the general population in the United States in terms of age and gender, the sample is likely restricted to individuals who had identified as active participants in online survey groups. As the survey used in the study was conducted online and no identifying information was collected, the potential for researcher bias and related threats to internal validity were low. The cross-sectional, non-experimental design was another limitation of

this study; therefore, the results could not be generalized across other populations nor could a causal relationship between the variables be determined. In addition, this study recruited participants from the United States only; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to those individuals living outside of the United States. Additional limitations were revealed after the recruitment of participants and collection of data. One additional limitation of this study was the small sample size. Although 179 participants are sufficient for statistical analysis, a larger sample size might have improved the 14% response rate and produced different results.

Recommendations for Future Research

Both knowledge sharing and information-seeking behaviors have been thoroughly but primarily separately examined within the literature. Previous research has not examined the relationship between newcomers' perceptions of supervisor's knowledge-sharing behaviors and the five specific information-seeking tactics identified by Miller (1996). In this study, I addressed that gap in the literature using social exchange theory, which emphasizes the reciprocal nature of social interactions (Blau, 1960) and the role of cost-benefit analysis in determining the behaviors of the individuals involved in the interaction (Homans, 1958). Therefore, one recommendation for future research would be to examine further the exact nature of the interaction between the knowledge holder and the knowledge seeker as opposed to examining each side of the interaction in isolation. For example, using matched-pairs data collection methods in which supervisors' self-reported knowledge-sharing attitudes were directly matched to the information-seeking tactics of their specific newcomers would allow researchers to more

thoroughly and accurately examine the influence of supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes on newcomers' information-seeking behaviors.

Researchers have examined the influence of intrinsic factors such as self-efficacy (Kim & Yun, 2015; Ojedokun & Idemudia, 2014; Yesil et al., 2013; Yueru et al., 2013) on knowledge-sharing. In addition, previous research has found that characteristics such as conscientiousness (Tidwell & Sias, 2005), self-efficacy (Anseel et al., 2015), curiosity (Harrison et al., 2011), and orientation toward learning (Cho, 2013) influence information-seeking behavior. Therefore, another recommendation for future research would be to examine the influence of the knowledge holder's and the information seeker's personality characteristics on the relationship between perceptions of supervisor's knowledge-sharing and the use of information-seeking tactics.

This study used a cross-sectional, non-experimental, quantitative research design to examine the correlation between supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes and five information-seeking behaviors of new employees. Using a qualitative research design, Kammeyer-Mueller et al. (2013) noted that supervisor support of newcomers tended to decline over the first 90 days of employment. Therefore, another recommendation for future research is to use longitudinal data collection methods to examine similar trends and assess possible causal relationships between knowledge sharing and information seeking for the same individuals over the first year of employment. By examining trends in the research procedures used to study knowledge management, Ngulube (2012) determined that researchers should give careful consideration to a variety of methodologies to enhance the research. Therefore, another recommendation for further

research is to use mixed-methods and qualitative approaches to examine the relationship between knowledge sharing and information seeking as this would account for the experiences of the supervisor and new employees. As this study relied upon data collected from individuals in the United States, another recommendation for future research would be to replicate the study in other countries and cultures to test the generalizability of the results. In addition, the results of this study found inverse relationships between perceptions of supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes and the information-seeking tactics of indirect inquiry and observing. These small to medium correlations could be attributed to the small sample size; therefore, further research with larger sample size is also warranted.

Practical Implications

In this study, I found statistically significant correlations between newcomers' perceptions of their supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes and information-seeking tactics of (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (e) observing. Correlation does not, however, speak to causation (Creswell, 2009); therefore, this study's practical implications are limited without further research.

However, the overall results showed that the correlation between supervisors' knowledge sharing and the information-seeking tactic of direct inquiry was strongly in the positive direction; whereas the correlation between knowledge sharing and the remaining information-seeking tactics of indirect inquiry, third-party inquiry, testing limits, and observing were in the negative direction. From a practical standpoint, these results suggest that when supervisors are willing to share their knowledge, it encourages

newcomers to come to them directly and overtly as opposed to seeking information through indirect or covert means. By adopting positive knowledge sharing attitude, supervisors can therefore maximize the benefits and minimize the costs associated with knowledge exchanges during newcomer's first year of employment. Newcomers to an organization also have much to gain from a better understanding of how their perceptions of a supervisor's knowledge-sharing attitudes contribute to their information-seeking behaviors. This awareness could improve knowledge exchanges and limit negative newcomer reactions that can lead to interpersonal conflict (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016), poor role performance (Srikanth & Jomon, 2013), withdrawal behaviors, and voluntary turnover (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013).

The results of this study also showed statistically significant correlations for both direct inquiry from supervisors (Hypothesis 1) and third-party inquiry (Hypothesis 3). Therefore, the results confirmed previous research on the newcomer's perception of the initial value of a supervisor's knowledge sharing during organizational entry (Allen & Shanock, 2013; De Vos & Freese, 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Srikanth & Jomon, 2013). In addition, even though previous research has found that supervisor feedback is perceived by newcomers as more valuable than coworker feedback (Srikanth & Jomon, 2013), coworker knowledge sharing has also been found to be correlated to task mastery (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016) and task performance (Kim & Yun, 2015; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016). From the new employee's perspective, the results of this study could, therefore, be used to educate supervisors and coworkers on the various information-seeking behaviors of newcomers. With greater awareness of how

knowledge-sharing attitudes impact social interactions with a new employee, supervisors and coworkers can learn to avoid behaviors that negatively impact newcomer's workplace adjustment during organizational entry.

Implications for Positive Social Change

This study examined the impact of perceptions of supervisor's knowledge sharing, the independent variable, on five newcomer information-seeking tactics, the sub-levels of the dependent variable. These variables represent complementary aspects of social interactions (Homans, 1958) that occur between a supervisor and a new employee during knowledge exchange. These social exchanges are part of the newcomer's socialization process intended to provide role clarity (Akremi et al., 2014; Lapointe et al., 2014) improve performance (Guo et al., 2014), and support adjustment into the new organization (Lapointe et al., 2014). Therefore, the results of this study have important implications for positive social change for organizations hiring new employees, the supervisors of those new employees, and of course, the new employees.

The results of this study have implications for positive social change for organizational leaders especially for HR professionals who are often responsible for designing and implementing new employee orientation and training programs (Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016). Although formal socialization programs are viewed as primarily within the control of the organization (Allen & Shanock, 2013; Cooper-Thomas et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2014), the results of this study support the idea that social integration is influenced by newcomers' perceptions of their supervisor's supportive behaviors including knowledge sharing (De Vos & Freese, 2011; Nifadkar & Bauer, 2016; Srikanth

& Jomon, 2013). Based on the results of this study, organizational leaders need to encourage positive knowledge-sharing attitudes among supervisors due to the strong correlation to new employees' proactive information-seeking behaviors.

In addition, the results of this study highlight the need for improved orientation and training programs for both supervisors and newcomers. Employees, especially those promoted to be supervisors, may need guidance to learn how to lead others in helpful and positive ways. In addition, I found no relationship between knowledge sharing and indirect inquiry for less experienced and less educated participants. These categories of newcomers seem willing to use indirect inquiry even when their supervisors are willing to share information. Therefore, newcomers may need the additional support during orientation and training programs to make less use of indirect inquiry, particularly if they are young and new to the workforce.

The results of this study also confirm that supervisors are in a unique position to promote positive social change through their knowledge-sharing attitudes and behaviors. New employees look to their supervisors as the primary source of information about their new jobs. Positive knowledge-sharing attitudes increase the likelihood that newcomers will use direct inquiry to attain this knowledge. In keeping with social exchange theory, when new employees directly seek information from their supervisors, they are more likely to get the answers that they need and to see the reciprocal benefits of continuing to use direct and overt means to gain knowledge. When supervisors have negative attitudes toward sharing information, newcomers will look to less direct strategies which could increase the time it takes for new employees to learn their jobs and integrate into the

workplace. When new employees do not seek knowledge directly from supervisors, they may develop erroneous beliefs and attitudes that neither the organization nor the supervisor wants them to hold. Therefore, it is in the best interest of supervisors to identify those behaviors that negatively influence newcomer's direct information seeking, which may mean setting aside any apprehension and taking steps to encourage more overt tactics.

The results of this study also have social change implications for new employees. According to social exchange theory, knowledge exchange is a social interaction with reciprocal benefits and costs for both parties. This means that although supervisors' attitudes toward knowledge sharing influence new employees' choice of information-seeking behaviors, new employees also have an important role to play during the knowledge exchange. When new employees seek information directly from their new supervisor, they are increasing the likelihood that the supervisor will directly and overtly share information with them. This is valuable insight for new employees who may perceive themselves as having little influence on their new supervisors. When newcomers use indirect or covert information-seeking tactics in response to their perceptions of their supervisor's knowledge sharing attitude, they may be inadvertently contributing to those negative attitudes. Although it may be difficult to directly approach a new supervisor, especially if the supervisor appears to have a negative attitude toward to sharing information, the new employee would do well to remember that perception is not always reality. The supervisor may also have misperceptions about the new employee. By recognizing how attitudes shape behaviors, both new employees and their supervisors can

learn to recognize their biases and choose to use more direct tactics for knowledge exchange. In doing so, all of the stakeholders including the organization, the supervisor, and the new employee will be supporting proactive behaviors which could lead to improved job performance (Zhang et al., 2014) and greater job satisfaction (Anseel et al., 2015) for those involved in knowledge transfer during a newcomer's first year on the job.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between newcomers' perceptions of supervisors' knowledge-sharing attitudes and the five information-seeking tactics of (a) direct inquiry, (b) indirect inquiry, (c) third-party inquiry, (d) testing limits, and (e) observing. The results of this study were consistent with previous research showing that newcomers' perceptions influence their behaviors, including their source of information-seeking tactic during organizational entry. It is impossible, however, to say that one source of information or even one particular information-seeking tactic has a practical advantage over any other. By acknowledging the reciprocal nature of the relationship with new employees, however, organizations and their supervisors are in a better position to ensure that newcomers have the information that they need to integrate into and adjust to their new work environment successfully.

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Appendix A: Permission to Use Knowledge Sharing Instrument

4/1/2018 Re: Requesting Permission to Use Questionnaire Items on... - Melissa A. Denton

<https://outlook.office.com/owa/?viewmodel=ReadMessageItem&ItemID=AAMkAGIwZDZlZjZjLThjMWYtNGU2OC1hZjIxLTk5MjUzYTllYzRmMgBGAAAAAAAppLvHIEEm>

Re: Requesting Permission to Use Questionnaire Items on Knowledge Sharing Attitudes

Yes, you have permission to use my questionnaire from my MISQ paper in your research.

Regards,
Gilbert

Bock, Gee-Woo (Gilbert) Ph.D., Professor

CV:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MxIeXBKQU8XsKFBi0dt6gF2jzckFVzoKvIC5If9v2SM/edit?usp=sharing>

On Wed, Mar 21, 2018 at 8:17 PM, Melissa A. Denton wrote:

Dear Dr. Bock:

Thank you very much for responding to my email and for sending your questionnaire that you used in your MISQ paper.

I infer from your email that you are granting me permission to use it in my study. Is that correct?

To go ahead with my study I need explicit permission from authors of the instruments I will use, unless the instruments were previously published.

If you could email me the following or similar statement it would help to provide that explicit permission.

Yes, you have permission to use my questionnaire from my MISQ paper in your research.

Thank you again for your support,
Melissa Denton

Appendix B: Permission to Use Information Tactic Scale

4/1/2018 Re: Requesting Permission to Use Information-seeking Scale - Melissa A. Denton

<https://outlook.office.com/owa/?viewmodel=ReadMessageItem&ItemID=AAMkAGIwZDZlZjZjLThjMWYtNGU2OC1hZjIxLTk5MjUzYTllYzRmMgBGAAAAAAApplvHIEEm>

Re: Requesting Permission to Use Information-seeking Scale

Hello Melissa,

Yes, you have permission to use my information-seeking scale in your research. Best wishes in your dissertation endeavors and I look forward to learning of your findings.

Cheers, Vernon

Vernon Miller, Ph.D.

From: Melissa A. Denton

Sent: Wednesday, March 14, 2018 10:33 PM

To: Miller, Vernon

Subject: Requesting Permission to Use Information-seeking Scale

Vernon D. Miller, Ph.D.

Dear Dr. Miller,

I am a doctoral student from Walden University writing my dissertation tentatively titled *Impact of Supervisors' Knowledge-sharing behaviors on Newcomers' Information-Seeking Behaviors* under the direction of my dissertation committee chaired by Dr. Maxwell Rainforth, who can be reached by telephone.

Wed 3/14/2018 11:12 PM

To: Melissa A. Denton

4/1/2018 Re: Requesting Permission to Use Information-seeking Scale - Melissa A. Denton

<https://outlook.office.com/owa/?viewmodel=ReadMessageItem&ItemID=AAMkAGIwZDZlZjZjLThjMWYtNGU2OC1hZjIxLTk5MjUzYTllYzRmMgBGAAAAAAApplvHIEEm>

I would like your permission to use your information-seeking tactic scale in my research study. I would like to use and print your survey under the following conditions:

I will use the scale only for my research study and will not sell or use it with any compensated or curriculum development activities.

I will include the copyright statement on all copies of the instrument.

I will send a copy of my completed research study to your attention upon completion of the study.

If these are acceptable terms and conditions, please indicate so by replying to me through email:

Sincerely,
Melissa Denton

Appendix C: Scatterplots of Predictor versus Criterion Variables

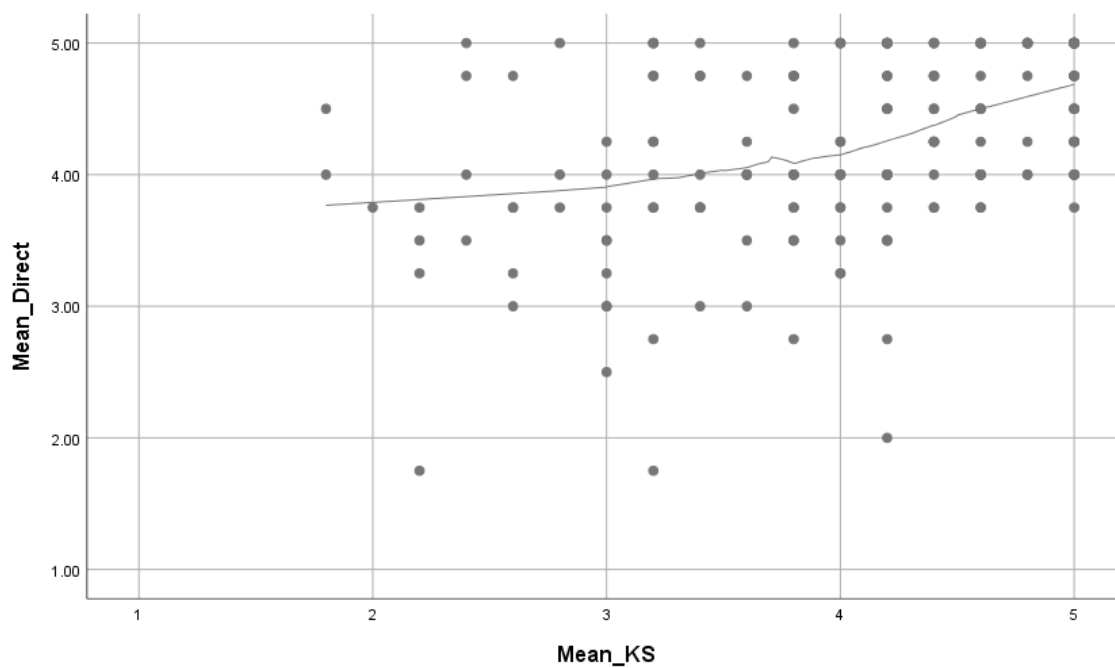


Figure C1. Scatterplot for knowledge sharing versus direct inquiry.

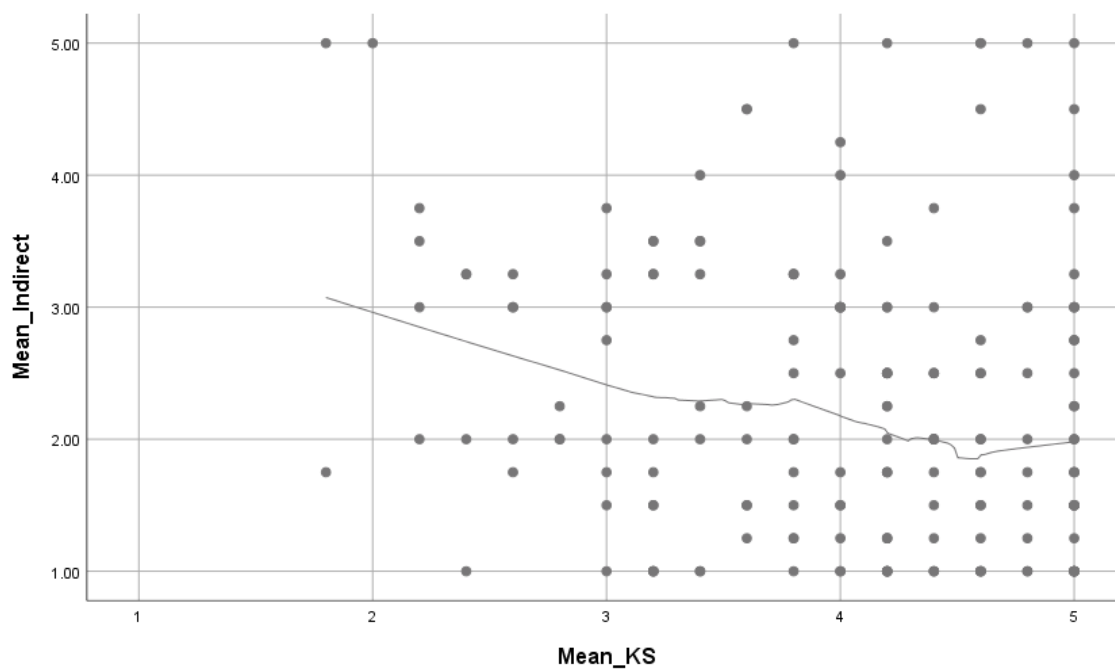


Figure C2. Scatterplot for knowledge sharing versus indirect inquiry.

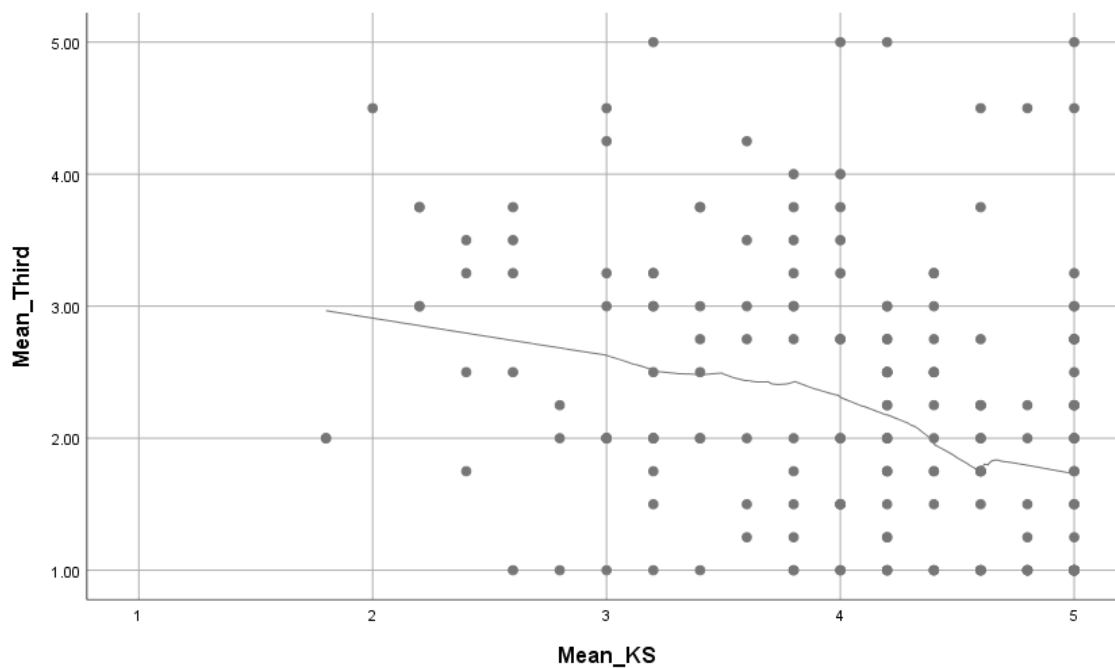


Figure C3. Scatterplot for knowledge sharing versus third-party inquiry.

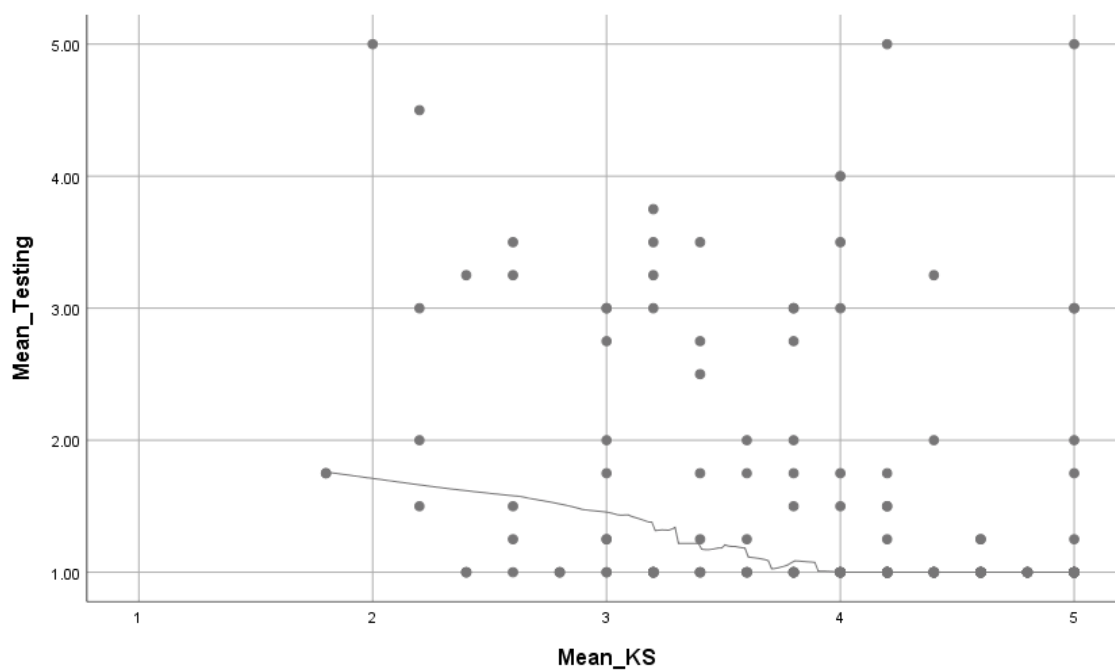


Figure E4. Scatterplot for knowledge sharing versus testing limits.

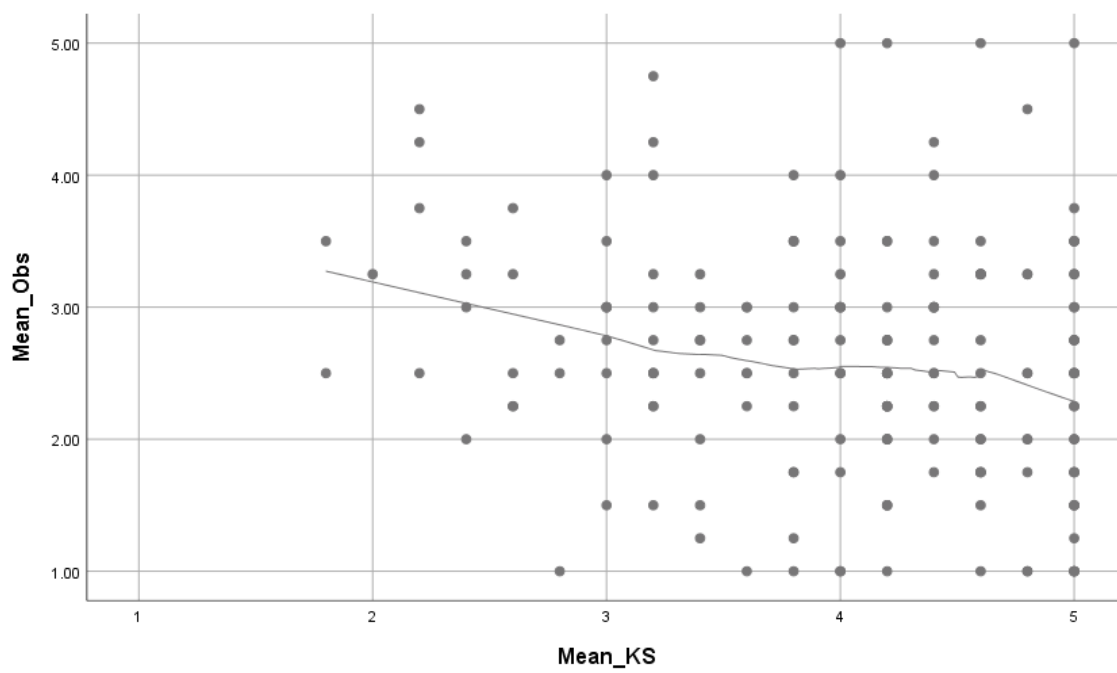


Figure C5. Scatterplot of knowledge sharing versus observing.

Appendix D: Q-Q Plots for Residuals of Regression of Criterion Variables

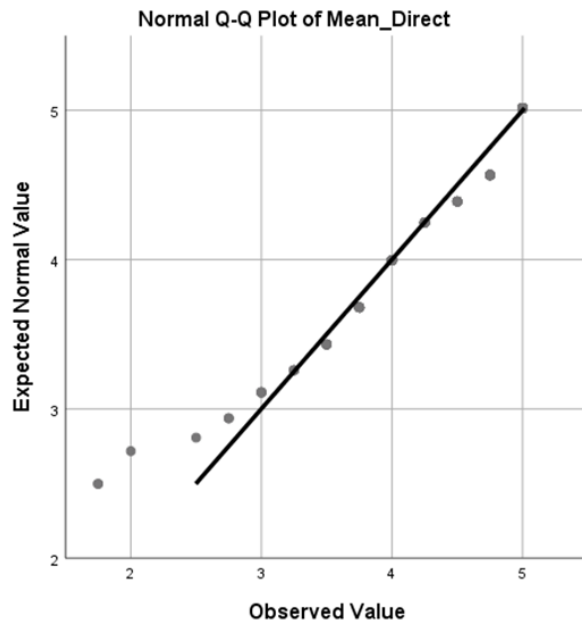


Figure D6. Q-Q Plot for residuals from simple linear regression using variables of knowledge sharing (predictor) and direct inquiry (criterion).

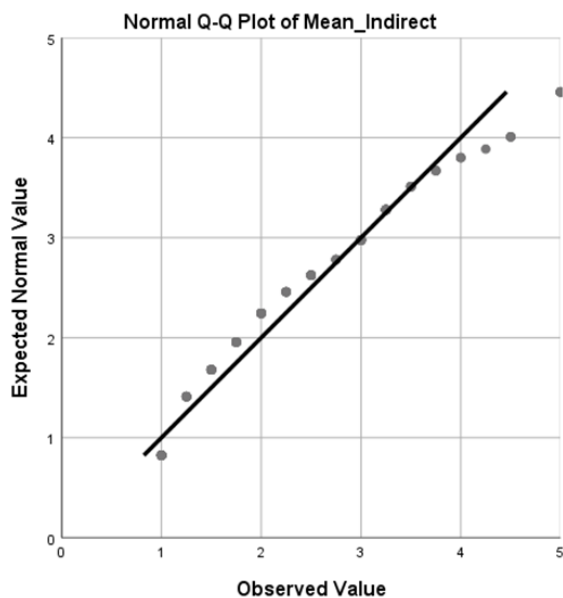


Figure D7. Q-Q Plot for residuals from simple linear regression using variables of knowledge sharing (predictor) and indirect inquiry (criterion).

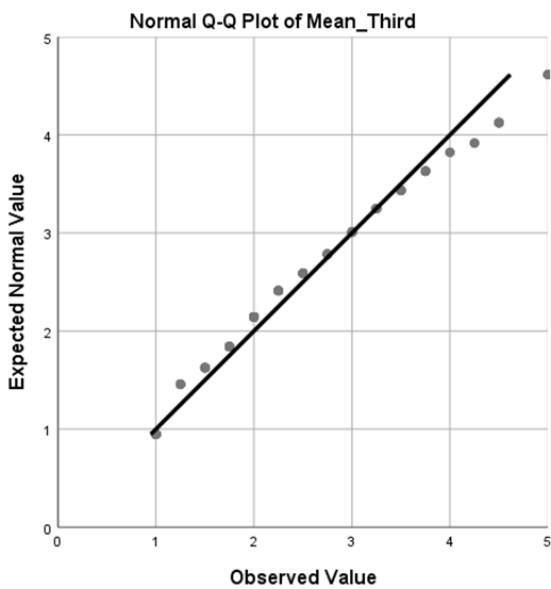


Figure D8. Q-Q Plot for residuals from simple linear regression using variables of knowledge sharing (predictor) and third-party inquiry (criterion).

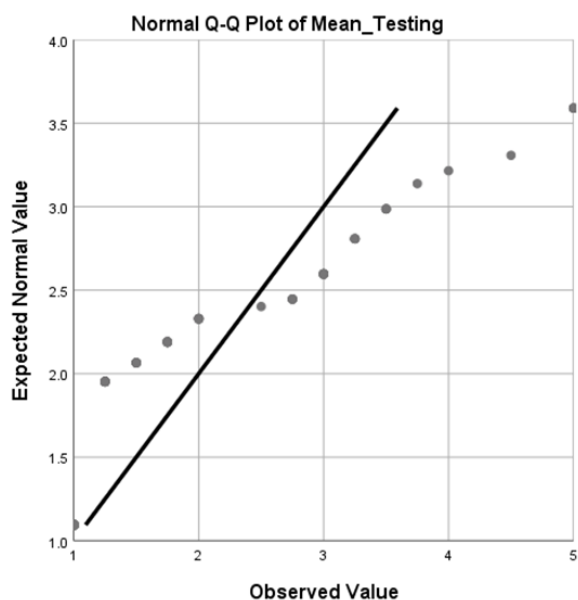


Figure D9. Q-Q Plot for residuals from simple linear regression using variables of knowledge sharing (predictor) and testing limits (criterion).

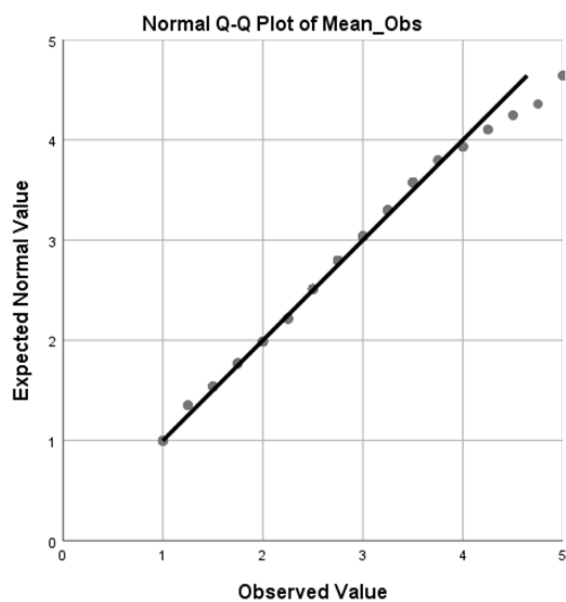


Figure D10. Q-Q Plot for residuals from simple linear regression using variables of knowledge sharing (predictor) and observing (criterion).

Appendix E: Residual Plots

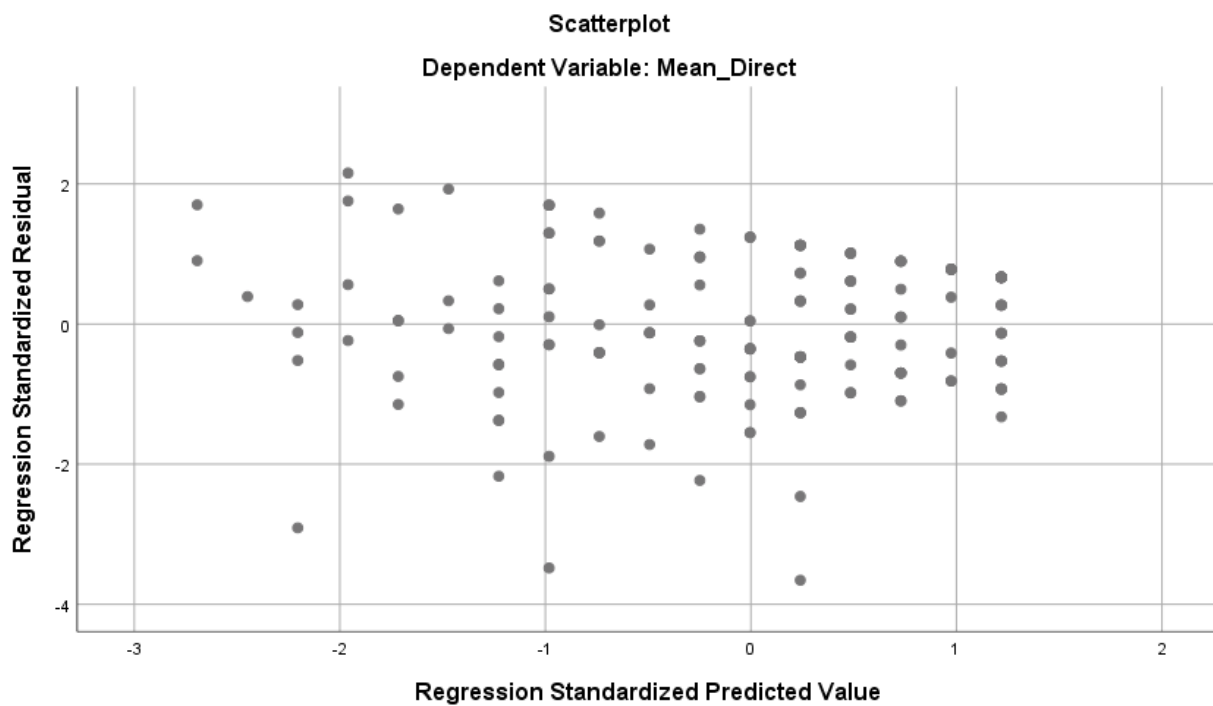


Figure E11. Residual plot for information-seeking tactic – Direct inquiry.

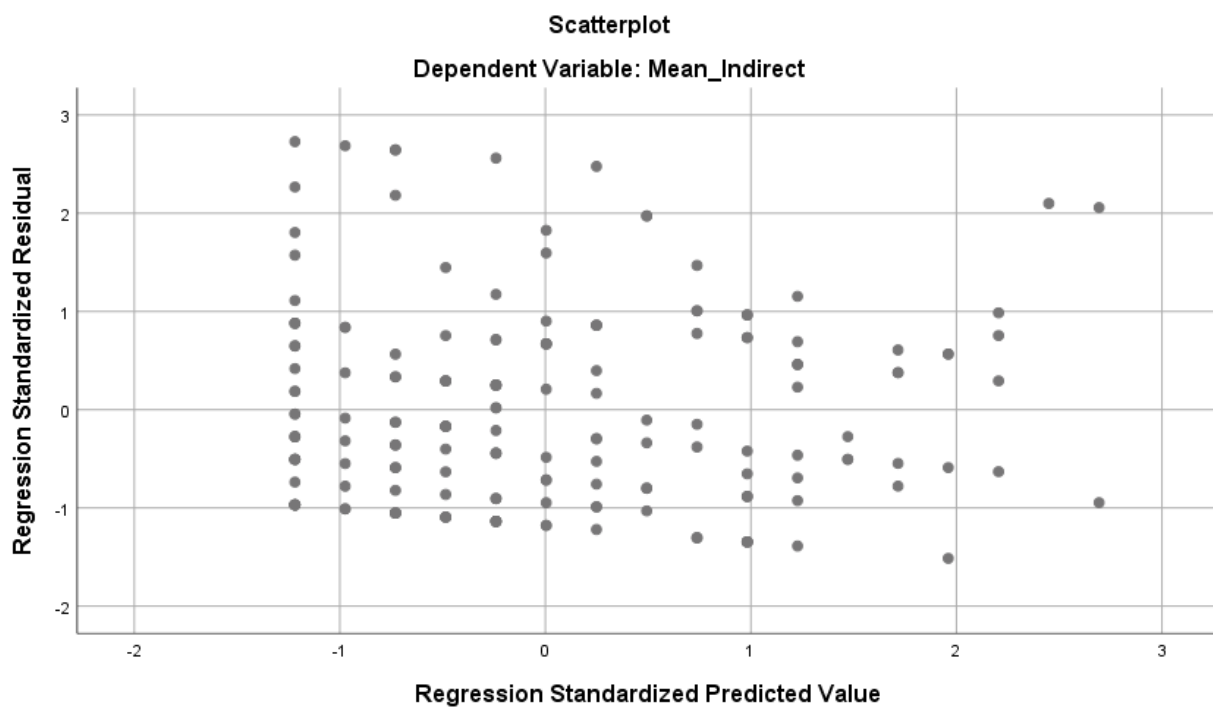


Figure E12. Residual plot for information-seeking tactic – Indirect inquiry.

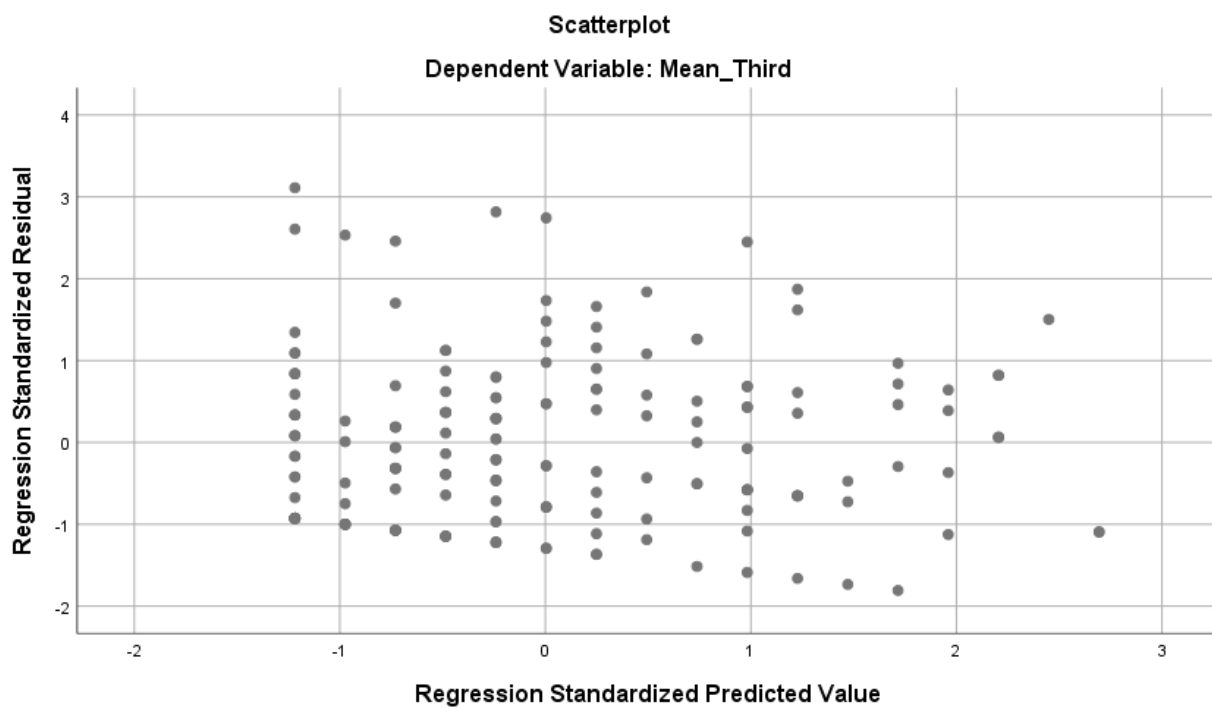


Figure E13. Residual plot for information-seeking tactic – Third-party inquiry.

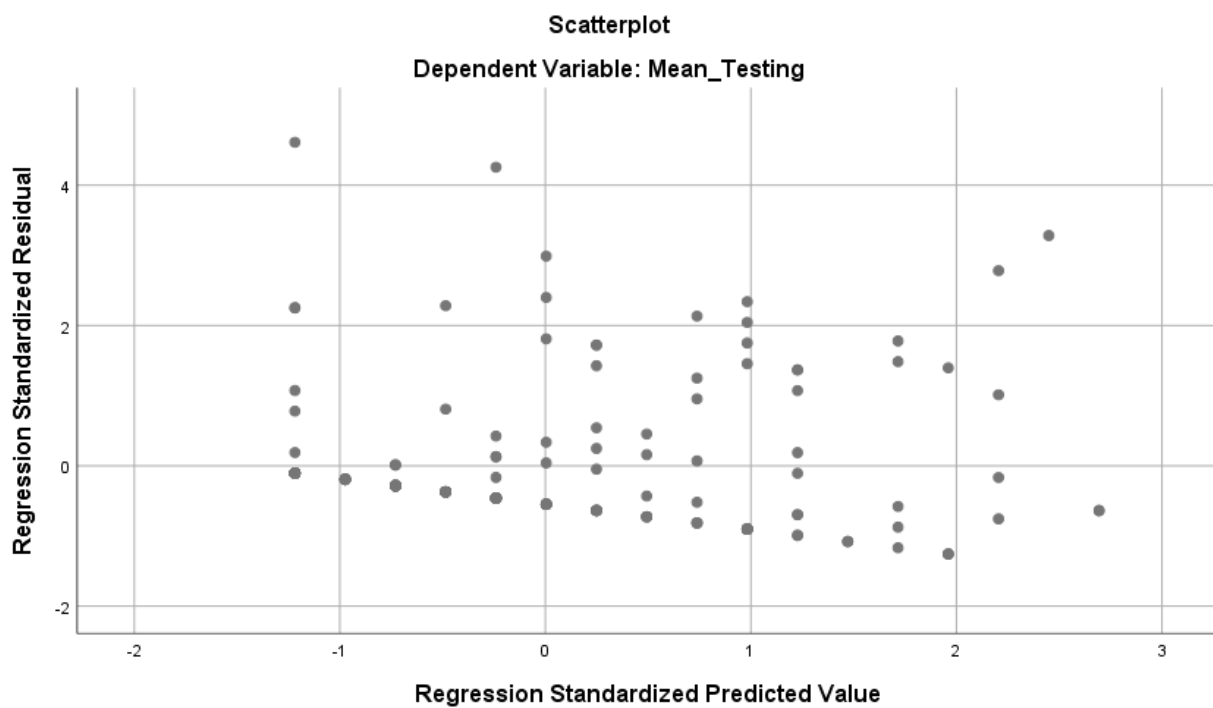


Figure E14. Residual plot for information-seeking tactic – Testing limits.

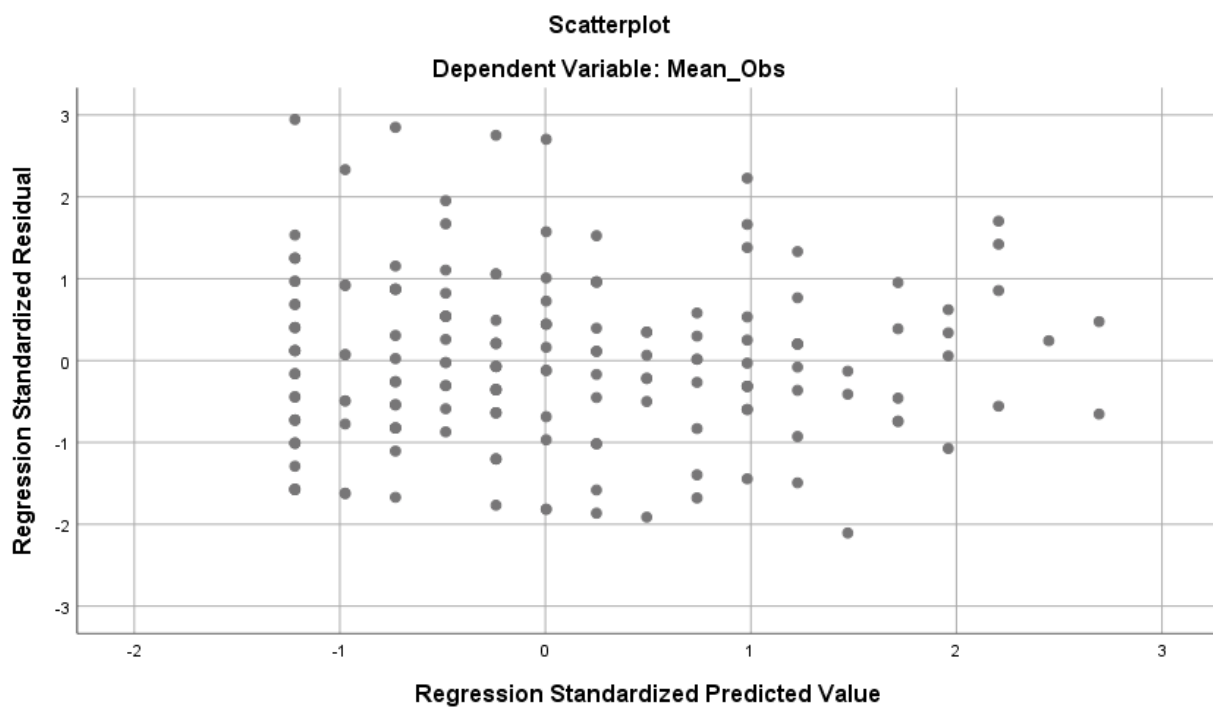


Figure E15. Residual plot for information-seeking tactic – Observing.