

Organizational Integration and Wellbeing of Post-Acquisition Employees: Moderating Roles of Leadership and Coworker Support

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Abstract: The incidence of mergers and acquisitions tend to strain post-acquisition employees due to the tension and anxiety that their attendant job losses, redundancies, and work overload generate. Since mergers and acquisitions are virtually inevitable in today's global economy, with employees exposed to new coworkers, new leadership, and new organizational cultures, understanding how these can be employed to stem job strain and its consequent threats on productivity and employee wellbeing is imperative. This research specifically aimed at investigating how job strain can be mitigated by the culture of organizational integration with social support from superiors and coworkers determining when and the extent to which this can happen. Employing a correlation design, a sample of 304 junior and mid-level employees of new generation commercial banks and telecommunication organizations in Lagos Nigeria responded to a survey instrument comprising relevant measures. Moderated regression analysis was carried out on the data generated which revealed significant negative influences of organizational integration, superior's support, and coworker support on job strain; significant moderation of integration*job strain relationship by superior's support; and insignificant moderation of same by coworker support. Post hoc analyses, regarding the integration*superior's support interaction, revealed that superior's support was effective in moderating the influence of organizational integration on job strain only when supportive leaders—to whom employees were directly subordinated—were involved in the integration process. Managements of merging organizations need to imbibe and effectively deploy the culture of integrating old and new employees, ensuring that superiors and management staff play significant supportive roles in the process.

Keywords: Wellbeing, Job Strain, Organizational Integration, Social Support, Superior's Support, Coworker Support, Organizational Culture.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, cases of mergers and acquisitions—hitting 40,000 in 2009 (Adeniji et.al, 2013)—have been the order of the day in business across the globe (Nicholson, 2000; Cunha & Cooper, 2002). But while the owners of organizations going into this kind of change are high in optimism, their employees groan in tension, uncertainties, and fear (Haspeslagh and Jemison, 1991), sense of loss (Galosy, 1990), apprehensions, anxiety, insecurity, depression, and physical illness (Marks & Cutcliffe, 1988; Van Dam et.al, 2008). The extent to which there is interaction and coordination between or among the firms involved in a merger

or acquisition is known as organizational integration (Haspeslagh and Jemison, 1991). It is concerned mainly with what members believe and understand about who they are as an organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006; Hatch et.al, 2015) and thus entails efforts at breaking down the barriers to cordial work relationships, communications, and perceptions that characterize people from different organization's cultures and social identities coming together (Lerner & Keltner, 2001; Cho et.al, 2014). That integration must be carried out and effectively too is quaint-essential, especially during or after mergers/acquisitions, more so that research suggests that a strong employee commitment and successful change management—devoid of job strain—can be expected when post-merger employees are effectively integrated (Adeniji et.al, 2013).

The task of integrating employees from different organizations with one another in a new organization may sound simplistic; it may become a daunting one if neglected. In many mergers and acquisitions, because different, formerly separate organizations, each of which may have existed with its own distinctive cultures for long (Schein, 1988), merge into a new one, a big question beckons. The question is that of the role of leaders not only to facilitate organizational integration despite differences in organizational cultures, but also to ensure that integration fosters employee wellbeing regardless of employees' typical unpleasant reactions to mergers and acquisitions (Marks & Cutcliffe, 1988; Haspeslagh and Jemison, 1991). The imperative of such a question lies more in existing research evidence about failed mergers and acquisitions—depicting over half of them as having failed (Ashkenas & Francis, 2000; Moeller et.al, 2005) and indicating that most of the failures resulted, wholly or in part, from poor integration.

Verschoor (2006) itemizes the attributes and responsibilities leaders in the mould of managers that may answer this important question. Managers have to regularly communicate with employees about the company's direction and plan, they must efficiently and effectively coordinate employees and resources and clarify to employees how their work relates to company's goals, and they must set an example of integrity in the business and follow their words with actions (Verschoor, 2006). They also must treat their subordinates with respect and fairness, reinforce their sense of pride in themselves and

the organization, and build and reinforce the team and camaraderie spirit among them (Verschoor, 2006).

Furthermore, leaders are known to play a major role in the creation and maintenance of organizational culture (Nicholson, 2000; Fisher & Muller, 2005; Buhler, 2007), which is why making visions and values meaningful to followers by modeling them is also a leadership responsibility (Kouzes and Posner, 1995). Corporate culture represents the way things are done in an organization reflecting the beliefs of organization members as to what constitutes appropriate behaviours and procedures; serving as a regulatory mechanism uniting organizational members into a social structure (Nicholson, 2000; Cunha & Cooper, 2002). Therefore, given its role in driving the initial stages of culture formation in emerging firms (Nicholson, 2000; Cunha & Cooper, 2002), leadership needs not only to ensure the invention of new and better ways of running such firms, but also provide some security to help the group—especially of acquired employees—to tolerate the anxiety of giving up old, effective styles while learning new ones (Schein, 1984). The imperative of this lies in the open reality that the change brought about by mergers and acquisitions not only implies new leadership, but also new rules of competition, which demand appropriate behaviours and values by organizational members (Cunha & Cooper, 2002).

It thus behooves of managers to provide support for employees and positively influence their health and wellbeing by ensuring effective and consistent communication (Stansfield et.al, 2000, Giga et al., 2003), showing appreciation for the individual's work and concern for his or her welfare. These are considered essential in preventing a post-acquisition employee from developing severe forms of stress that usually results from mergers and acquisitions—such as posttraumatic stress disorder (Giga et al., 2003). Therefore, for mergers or acquisitions to work, organizational integration has to be coordinated by organizational leadership. Moreover, being the most influential factor for achieving synergies (Larsson and Finkelstein, 1999) and employees' commitment (Adeniji et.al, 2013), it must be done with the purpose of linking all the organizations' operations as well as her human resources together (Haspeslagh and Jemison, 1991; Allatta & Singh, 2011). Understandably, managers who are incapable of these would be perceived as unsupportive.

Apart from being incapable of these leadership responsibilities and roles, some managers may—in style and behaviours—be corrupt, incompetent, irresponsible, unpleasant, unjust, unfair, irritable, bias, manipulative, discriminatory, unreliable, inconsiderate, and untrustworthy (Hogan, et.al, 1990; Warneka, 2006; Hausknecht et.al, 2008). Such leadership behaviours can rob post-acquisition employees of the organizational support that should guarantee them the warmth, assurances, reassurances, and encouragement that they need from their leaders at such a time.

As an interpersonal transaction involving one or more emotional concern (e.g., liking, love, empathy), instrumental aid (goods and services), information (about the environment), and appraisal (information relevant to self-evaluation) [House, 1981], social/organizational support can help post-acquisition employees overcome the challenges of change. The “buffering hypothesis,” which proposes that the provision of social support will buffer the negative effects of stress on well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985), explains the important role that social support can play in the wellbeing of post-acquisition employees. Even if such employees' anxieties and feelings of uncertainties become compounded by poor integration as it is being proposed in the present study, we expect that social support from superiors will ameliorate the challenges such that they will not result in strain and illnesses for the employees. The plausibility of this expectation is backed by research evidence that social support guarantees subsequent well-being (e.g., Collins et.al, 1993; Corrigan et al., 1994); that those with low social support were likely to experience high psychological distress—at the rate of 1 to 3 (Rugulies, 2005)—as found in a five-year follow-up study of 3,488 workers between 1995-2000 in Denmark); and, particularly, that supportive relationships at work, especially with one's boss, can serve the social support purpose (e.g., Beehr et.al, 1990; Cohen and Wills, 1985; Ganster et.al, 1986; Viswesvaran et.al, 1999). For example, supportive supervision, including showing appreciation for an employee's work and concern for his or her welfare, is considered essential in preventing him/her from developing severe forms of stress such as posttraumatic stress disorder (Mitchell & Stevenson, 2000; Giga et al., 2003).

Apart from leadership, post-acquisition employees can also draw support from one another. Hogg & Terry's (2001b) summary of the social identity theory views a group with which an employee identifies, e.g., a work group or an age group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989), a gender or racial/ethnic group (Randel, 2002), a professional group (Johnson et.al, 2006), a same-cadre group or the organization itself, as a social category that helps him or her define who s/he is in terms of the defining characteristics of the category. This category-based self-definition thus becomes a part of the employee's self-concept because self-conception comes from self-categorization which is defined as the cognitive grouping of the self as identical to some class of people and in contrast to some other classes of people (Turner & Onorato, 1999).

While this suggests that post-acquisition employees may initially have difficulty relating freely with unfamiliar coworkers or in new work teams of unfamiliar people they may be able to get over this if promptly and effectively integrated with such coworkers. With successful organizational integration, the process of self-categorization is re-enacted among post-acquisition employees who can then more easily redefine their identities, and then rely on the social support of their new coworkers (Thoits, 1986). This usually pays off in terms of renewed positive self-esteem and

high sense of commitment to the groups (Ellemers et.al., 1999; Meyer et.al, 2006). This study proposes coworker support to make up for employees’ superiors’ support in softening the effect of the onslaught of the stress associated with major changes in their organization on their wellbeing. That coworker support can actually be more helpful in this regard is indicated by evidences from studies that suggest that the effects of colleague support were stronger than those obtained for superior’s support (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2001b; Randel, 2002; Kristensen & Borg, 2003; Johnson et.al, 2006; Lawal, 2012) and that low social support from co-workers, among other negative experiences, can trigger cardiovascular diseases among employees (Greer, 2005).

The importance and usefulness of treating the components of social support as distinct variables, especially in organizational research, as demonstrated in some studies, cannot be over-emphasized (e.g., Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Hogg & Terry, 2001b; Randel, 2002; Kristensen, 2002; Johnson et.al, 2006; Lawal, 2012). Nevertheless, most studies have employed the overall measure of social support (e.g., House, 1981; Pearlin, et.al, 1981; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Ganster et.al, 1986; Kaufmann & Beehr, 1986; Thoits, 1986; Kirmeyer & Dougherty, 1988; Collins et al., 1993; Eisenberger et.al, 1997; Swanson & Power, 2001; Adams, 2003; Greer, 2005; Rugulies, 2005; Luszczynska & Cieslak, 2005; Ehigie & Otukoya, 2005; Harris et.al, 2007; Peelle, 2007; Asgari et.al, 2008; Lawal, 2012). This study departs from this in taking a comparative look at the unique nature and strengths of two major components of social support at work, i.e., leadership (or superior’s) support and coworker

support as they influence job strain and moderate the relationship between organizational integration and job strain.

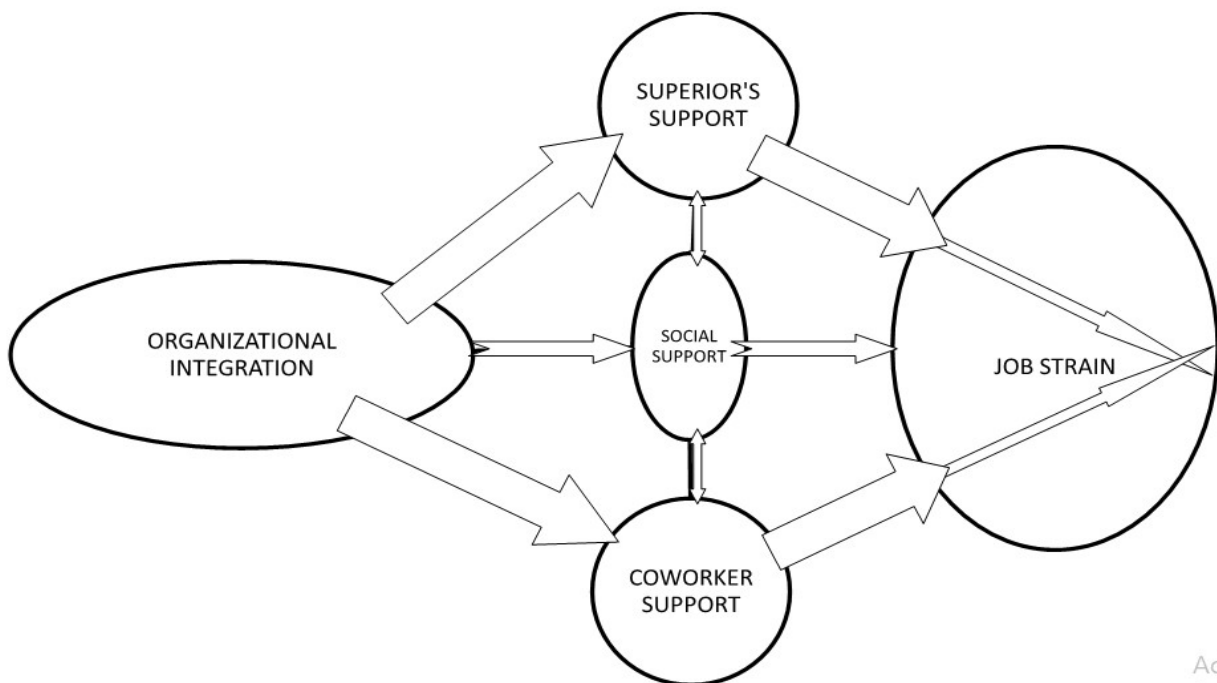
Unarguably social support (also known as organizational support in organizations) is a major, identifiable catalyst of organizational integration with organizational leadership as its chief driver and coworker support playing a significant role. As such, irrespective of the strength of coworker support in buffering integration*strain relationships, superiors’ support—where present—would be expected to play an enhancing role.

Framework

For the owners of merging organizations, optimism can be high due to what looks like exaggerated (and sometimes unrealistic) expectations as to outcomes of planned mergers and acquisitions. Because this tendency can be informed by overly optimistic projections of the assets of an emerging organization as simple addition/summation of the assets of the merging organizations (forgetting or denying the liabilities), the researcher refers to it as the *summative metaphor in mergers and acquisitions*.

Ironically, post-acquisition employees typically react unpleasantly to that same experience, and their unpleasant reactions can be reduced or accentuated depending on whether efforts at integrating them are effective and successful. The conceptual framework of this study illustrates this further. Accordingly, the researcher proposes that while good organizational integration can help employees avoid strain reactions, poor organizational integration would accentuate psychological distress to strain reactions.

FIGURE 1: THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL



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Given the important roles that organizational leadership plays in creating and integrating employees to the culture of new (post-acquisition) employees, we propose that provision of social support by these leaders can go a long way to “reduce” the harmful effects of the employees’ change-related psychological distress on their psychological and physical health. Notwithstanding these possible unpleasant consequences, leadership may fail to provide employees with needed support to facilitate organizational integration and mitigate job strain. Therefore, if organizational integration is unsuccessful, whether as a result of incompetent or bad leadership, post-acquisition employees may be unable to cope with the stress inherent in the merger, and consequently respond with strain. The researcher proposes that where this happens, post-acquisition employees may be able to count on coworkers for their support. By counting on the social support of their colleagues, post-acquisition employees can overcome the uncertainties and other unpleasant feelings that are associated with this kind of change. While it is quite possible for both leadership and coworker support to be lacking in the same post-acquisition organizations such that post-acquisition employees would become exposed to the distress associated with the change process, it is also possible that both forms of social support are present and effective to help rescue the employees from job strain. Therefore, the researcher also proposes that the concerted contributions of both leadership and coworker support will be more effective in ameliorating the relationship between organizational integration and job strain, especially where organizational integration is ineffective in assuaging the unpleasant feelings that are associated with mergers/acquisitions.

But given that the development of a supportive culture can be said to be an important responsibility of leaders, we conceive of superiors’ support—where present—as one that will moderate the relationship between organizational integration and strain reactions for post-acquisition employees to attain their highest levels of wellbeing possible. The researcher therefore proposes that superior’s support will contribute more than coworker support in reducing possible job strain consequences that may be due to poor integration of post-acquisition employees.

II. METHOD

Research participants and sampling methods

The researcher sampled 304 employees: 155 (51%) men and 149 (49%) women, aged 20-53 years (mean age = 31.93) and with work tenures ranging from 1-30 years (mean tenure=5.09 years). They comprised 192 (63.2%) junior employees and 112 (36.8%) mid-level employees of two newly acquired, first generation firms in Lagos Nigeria: a commercial bank and a telecommunications organization from where we surveyed 167 (54.9%) and 137 (45.1%) employees, respectively. Overall, while 161 (53%) of them were single, 140 (46.1%) were married, and 3 (1%) were either separated or divorced. These employees were selected using a combination of

systematic and stratified sampling. Given that the different branches of sampled organizations had different populations of employees and categories, the researcher employed the sampling techniques to ensure close to equitable numbers of junior and mid-level employees and an almost equitable numbers of males and females from the former head offices and branches of two organizations, a commercial bank and a telecommunications company, that had been recently acquired by their much bigger counterparts in their industries.

Data Collection Instruments

The survey instrument comprised three major measures supplemented with a bio-data form. The measures are:

Organizational Integration Culture Subscale is one of the dimensions of a four-dimensional measure of organizational culture (the three other dimensions are Performance Orientation, Culture, People Orientation Culture, and Market Orientation Culture). This four dimensional measure of organizational culture was developed by Cunha & Cooper (2002) from Harrison’s (1972) report about power, role, task, and person cultures; and Cooper’s (1988) culture manifestations which bothered on planning systems, organizational integration, decision making, management style, performance orientation, and organizational vitality. From the principal component analysis they carried out on the original 41 items of the Questionnaire of Organizational Culture in which a four-factor solution emerged, Cunha & Cooper (2002) reported high Cronbach’s Alpha for each of four subscales with that of organizational integration being 0.80.

Organizational Integration measures openness of internal communication and cooperation between individuals and units (Cunha & Cooper, 2002). All-six items making up the Organizational Integration Culture Scale are scored directly and in accord with a six-point Likert Format on which responses were obtained. The first two items’ response format ranged from “Never (1)” to “Always (6)”. These items were “How frequently are each person’s work objectives clearly defined?” and “How frequently is cooperation and coordination of the different divisions/units/departments of your organization encouraged?”. The response format of the four remaining items ranged from “Strongly Disagree (1)” to “Strongly Agree (6)”. Sample items included “Management go out of their way to keep employees fully informed on what is happening within the organization” and “Information and help are freely exchanged without fear or favour”.

Coworker Support and Superior’s Support Subscales are separate measures of social support in organizational settings and dimensions of the Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ) [Karasek, 1985; Karasek et.al, 1998]. While scores from either can be used independently, they can also be summed up as an overall score of social support in organizations. Superior’s support and coworker support are measured with items 32-36 (five items) and 37-42 (six items) of the JCQ, respectively. Responses to and scoring of items on the two

subscales are based on a four-point Likert format ranging from “Strongly Disagree (1)” to “Strongly Agree (4)”. Sample items included “My immediate superior is concerned about the welfare of those under him” and “My immediate superior is successful in getting people to work together”—for the Superior Support Subscale; and, “People I work with take a personal interest in me” and “The people I work with encourage each other to work together”—for the Coworker Support Subscale. And while items 34 and 39 of superior’s support and coworker support subscales, respectively, are reverse scored, all other items on the subscales are direct scored.

A Principal Component Analysis conducted on the Job Content Questionnaire in Lawal’s (2011) study revealed that all the six items of the superior’s support subscale and all the five items of the coworker’s support subscale, loaded exactly and significantly on their respective factors. Also a reliability analysis in the same study produced a Cronbach alpha of .79 for the Coworker Support Subscale.

The Job Strain Scale is a seven-item, one-dimensional measure of job strain in work settings developed by House and Rizzo (1972). The scale taps from respondents how much toll the stress associated with trying to fulfill the requirements of their jobs and workplace is taking on their physical and psychological health. Different authors who have previously used the scale (e.g., Cropanzano et.al, 1997; Miles & Perreault, 1976; Harris & Kacmar, 2006) report that it has good psychometric properties with Cronbach Alpha (reliabilities) ranging from .80 to .87; as well as a good discriminant validity when subjected, alongside with the LMX scale, to EFA using principal-components extraction (Harris & Kacmar, 2006). All-seven items on the scale are direct scored. Responses were given and scored on a five-point Likert Format ranging from “Strongly Disagree (1)” to “Strongly Agree (5)”. Sample items included “My job tends to directly affect my health” and “Problems associated with my job have kept me awake at night”.

III. METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

Accompanied and assisted by two postgraduate students, the researcher employed a combination of systematic and stratified sampling to select junior and mid-level employees from the former head offices and branches of two organizations, a commercial bank and a telecommunications company, that had been recently acquired by their much bigger counterparts in their industries. All employees in these offices had either seen some of their old colleagues being disengaged from their new organization and replaced with new, unfamiliar staff from the “acquirer” company, or now report to a new, immediate boss; or both. And since their (new) organization was still striving to settle down, each employee was also a candidate for redeployment or transfer. With the permission of the management of the new organizations, all selected employees responded to the survey

during extended breaks on the premises of their various offices.

Data recording

Data obtained were entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and coded (or recoded in some cases) according to a coding format that had been developed prior to data collection. The researcher also converted the key categorical variables in the study (i.e., sex, marital status, job cadre, religion, and nature of service/business of organization) to continuous variables, using dummy coding so as to allow for correct interpretation of their impacts on job strain. Specifically, for each of the above-mentioned categorical variables, the researcher assigned a zero value to the more or the most frequent category and a value of one (1) to the other/other categories.

Strategies employed to ensure data quality and integrity

The researcher centered all continuous predictors at their means before feeding them into the regression equation. This is in line with the requirement for avoiding multi-collinearity in hierarchical regression analyses.

Data analysis

The researcher performed a moderated regression analysis on the data to test for main predictions of job strain by organizational integration, superior’s support, and coworker support—among others. The regression, which was in five models, also tested for the interactions of superior’s support and integration and coworker support and integration on job strain. The researcher also employed Dawson’s Slopes (Dawson & Richter, 2006) to understand the nature and pattern of the superior’s support*integration interaction on job strain.

IV. RESULTS

The moderated regression analysis used to address the pertinent questions raised in this study resulted in coefficients that require explanations. There were five models in the entire result corresponding to the five steps involved in the analysis. As can be seen in table 1, the first step featured the entry of the categorical control variables of the study, i.e., sex, marital status, job cadre, religion, and nature of service/business of organization, into the regression equation. Having been dummy-coded (by assigning a zero value to the more or the most frequent category and a value of one (1) to the other/other categories of each of the categorical variables), the variables that were visible among those entered into the regression were ‘married’, ‘divorced/separated’, ‘male’, ‘junior’, ‘Islam’, and ‘banking’ (the remaining variables—that is, ‘single’, ‘female’, ‘mid-level’, ‘Christianity’, and ‘telecommunications’—were still in the equation but invisible having assumed zero values). Among all other dummies entered here, only ‘banking’ contributed significantly to job strain ($\beta=0.115$, $P<0.05$). This beta value, being positive, simply suggests that the bank-working post-acquisition

employees were more prone to job strain at the rate of 0.115 when compared to their counterparts in the telecommunications company.

The duo of age and job tenure, being continuous control variables in this study, was entered in model 2, but neither of them made a significant contribution to job strain. This suggests that how old post-acquisition employees in the study were, or how long they had worked in their organizations, would not make a difference in their strain reactions.

Next, the the independent variable, organizational integration, was entered into the regression in model 3. Interestingly, and as expected, organizational integration negatively predicted job strain ($\beta = -.124, P<0.05$) suggesting that job strain decreased by 0.12 for one standard deviation increase in organizational integration. This underscores the point earlier implied that effective organizational integration can reduce

the physical and psychological challenges associated with the challenges of mergers and acquisitions in post-acquisition employees.

Model 4 saw the entry of the duo of superior’s and coworker support, i.e., moderators in this study, into the regression equation. Both moderators contributed significantly and negatively to reducing job strain: $\beta = -.133, P<0.05$ for superior’s support, and $\beta = -.131, P<0.05$ for coworker support. Consistent with the proposition of this study, superior’s support contributed more, but the β margin between their contributions to reducing job strain was very slight (about $-.002$). Nevertheless, this could be an indication that the success of coworker support depends on the quality of superior’s support. For example, a sneak into their contributions to job strain in model 5 suggests that a wider β margin of $-.051$ between them with superior’s support contributing more.

Table 1: Moderation of Relationship between Organizational Integration and Job Strain by Superior’s And Coworker Support

PREDICTORS	MODEL 1		MODEL 2		MODEL 3		MODEL 4		MODEL 5	
	B	Beta(β)	B	Beta(β)	B	Beta(β)	B	Beta(β)	B	Beta(β)
MARRIED	-.771	-.065	-.322	-.027	-.364	-.031	-.453	-.038	-.582	-.049
DIVORCED/SEP.	4.766	.080	5.189	.087	4.962	.083	4.063	.068	3.922	.066
MALE	1.246	.105	1.301	.110	1.409	.119	1.551	.131	1.503	.127
JUNIOR	-.285	-.023	-.373	-.030	-.319	-.026	-.301	-.025	-.064	-.005
ISLAM	.634	.042	.640	.042	.508	.033	.272	.018	.223	.015
BANKING	1.361	.115*	1.399	.118	1.369	.115	1.119	.094	1.097	.092
AGE		-.052	-.062	-.058	-.068	-.069	-.089	-.056	-.067	
JOB TENURE		-.001	-.001	-.004	-.004	-.033	.032	.018	.017	
ORGANIZATIONAL INTEGRATION			-.074	-.124*	-.039	-.065	-.048	-.080		
SUPERIOR’S SUPPORT				-.299	-.133*	-.389	-.173**			
COWORKER SUPPORT				-.351	-.131*	-.326	-.122			
ORG.INTEGRATION* SUPERIOR’S SUPPORT					-.041		-.127*			
ORG.INTEGRATION* COWORKER SUPPORT					.001		.008			

* β is significant at the 0.05 level, ** β is significant at the 0.01 level

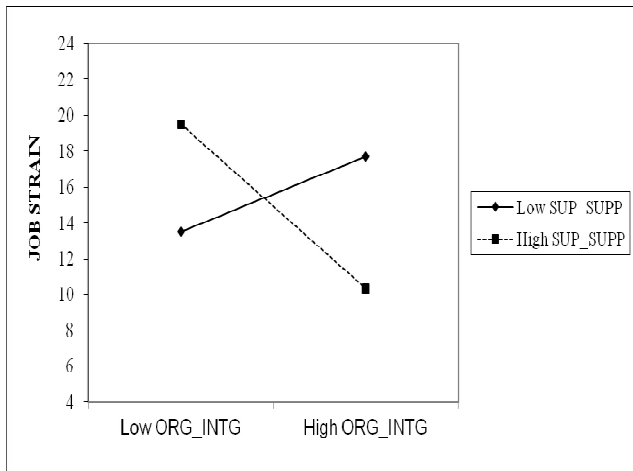
Model 5, the last of them, was devoted to the actual tests of moderation, i.e., tests of the proposed interactions of organizational integration with superior’s support on one hand, and with coworker support on the other. As table 1 reveals, while the superior’s support significantly interacted with organizational integration to reduce job strain ($\beta = -.127, P<0.05$), coworker support did not ($\beta = .008, P>0.05$). This particular result did not come as exactly as expected in that this study had proposed not only that superior’s support would

moderate organizational integration to reduce job strain, but also that coworker support might do this better.

The result suggests that superior’s support was able to ‘soften’ the influence of organizational integration on the physical and psychological wellbeing of post-acquisition employees. It further suggests that the wellbeing (i.e., reduction in job strain) of employees who perceived organizational integration as high (or effective) were further enhanced by high social

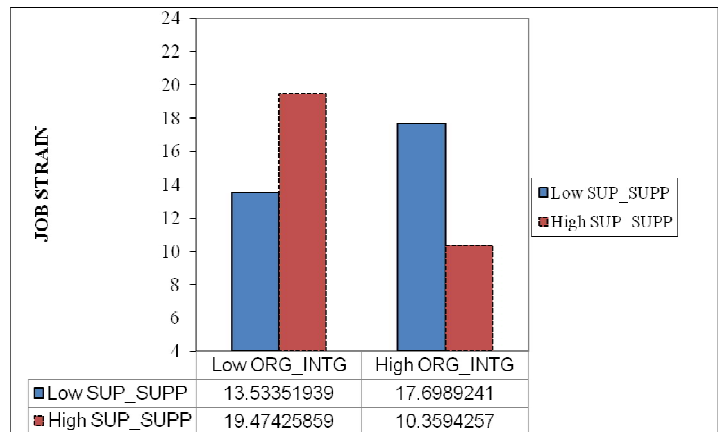
support from their immediate superiors. Also, the job strain reactions of employees, who experienced low (or ineffective) organizational integration but good social support from their immediate superiors at work, were reduced (and their wellbeing improved) no matter how hiked it could have become as a result of their experience of low organizational integration. Figures 2 and 3 of the interaction graph and the interaction chart, respectively (with a mean table attached to the interaction chart), further illustrates the moderation.

Figure 2: Graph Of the Interaction of Organizational Integration and Superior's Support on Job Strain.



The interaction graph, chart, and means in figures 2 and 3 are more revealing of the nature of the interaction between superior's support and organizational integration on job strain. They make very clear that whether superior's support contributed to reducing job strain depended on whether post-acquisition employees experienced high or low organizational integration. For example, the highest level of employee wellbeing (indicated as the lowest level of job strain, i.e., $\bar{x} = 10.36$) was reported when both organizational integration and superior's support were high, while the lowest level of employee wellbeing (indicated by the highest level of job strain, i.e., $\bar{x} = 19.47$) occurred when organizational integration was low and despite superior's support being high. Furthermore, the wellbeing of post-acquisition employees (indicated by a lower job strain, i.e., $\bar{x} = 13.53$) was better when they experienced low organizational integration and low superior's support to when they experienced low organizational integration but high superior's support (i.e., a higher job strain, $\bar{x} = 17.70$). This is suggestive of the likelihood that organizational integration might have played a more important role than superior's support in their interaction to improve the wellbeing of the post-acquisition employees.

Figure 3: Bar Chart and Mean Table of the Interaction of Organizational Integration and Superior's Support on Job Strain



As part of the regression analysis, the contribution of each block of variables (i.e., all variables in each model), as well as those of all the variables in the regression equation to the overall prediction of job strain were obtained. These are contained in table 2. Accordingly, all the categorical variables entered in model 1, together, accounted for an insignificant change of 3.8% in job strain (Change in $R^2 = .038$, $F = 1.96$, $P > 0.05$). The duo of age and job tenure, entered in model 2, together also accounted for an insignificant change of 0.2% in job strain (Change in $R^2 = .002$, $F = 3.41$, $P > 0.05$).

Furthermore, organizational integration, which was the independent variable of the study and entered alone in model 3, brought about a significant change of 1.5% in job strain (Change in $R^2 = .015$, $F = 4.68$, $P < 0.05$). Moreover, in model 4, where the moderators, i.e., superior's support and coworker support were entered en bloc into the regression, there was a significant change of 4.7% in job strain (Change in $R^2 = .047$, $F = 7.65$, $P < 0.01$). Finally, an insignificant change in job strain amounting to 1.4% (Change in $R^2 = .014$, $F = 2.22$, $P > 0.05$); and an overall variation in job strain accounted by all variables in this study, and amounting to 11.6%, were found.

Table 2: Joint Predictions of Job Strain

	MODEL 1	MODEL 2	MODEL 3	MODEL 4	MODEL 5
R ²	.038	.040	.055	.102	.116
CHANGE IN R ²	.038	.002	.015	.047	.014
F for change in R ²	1.960*	.341	4.68*	7.65**	2.22

* F is significant at the 0.05 level, ** F is significant at the 0.01 level

V. DISCUSSION

The alarming rates at which mergers and acquisitions have been failing are enough matter for concern. Even where they do not fail, their attendant consequences for employees' wellbeing are disturbing. This study's attempt to find answers to a myriad of questions on these phenomena, particularly

questions as to the roles played by organizational integration and support from organizational leaders and colleagues, has led to some important findings.

To start with, this study's supported proposition that successful organizational integration would take care of the usually negative reactions of employees to change enough to prevent job-related strain reactions is noteworthy. The finding further strengthens existing literature suggesting that poor or unsuccessful integration is the major explanation for negative and distress reactions to change (Thoits, 1986; Marks & Cutcliffe, 1988; Haspeslagh and Jemison, 1991; Cunha & Cooper, 2002; Giga et al., 2003; Rugulies, 2005; Ellemers et al., 1999; Meyer et al., 2006; Allatta & Singh, 2011; Adeniji et al., 2013). In an important way, this refocuses attention to the essence of the organizational socialization or re-socialization processes that take place during organizational integration whereby the employees are exposed to a new organizational culture. It is quite imaginable—in the light of the social identity theory—that the post-acquisition employee groups who benefitted from the integration process, compared to the employee groups who did not, had their unpleasant post-acquisition feelings so assuaged by its socializing and informative nature to counteract any further negative reactions. This experience must have conditioned such employees to identify with a social category in the new organization that helps him or her define who s/he is in terms of the defining characteristics of the category. (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Randell, 2002; Johnson et al., 2006), and to now see themselves as identical to some class of people (Turner & Onorato, 1999) that they had probably found strange and distanced themselves from.

The Person-environment fit (PEF) approach to stress clearly sheds more light on how this employee-organization relationship may be facilitated by the process of organizational integration, and why some employees may simply be impossible to integrate. The PEF is established on the belief that individual outcomes result from the interaction of the person and his or her environment (Giga et al., 2003). Research in this approach consists of two distinct perspectives, one in which there is a misfit between the expectations of an individual and the environmental characteristics/supplies available to fulfill those expectations, and the other in which stress results when environmental demands burden or exceed the individual's abilities (Edwards, 1996). There, regardless of the effectiveness on an organizational integration, some employees may simply not be candidates for the process owing to the incongruence between their personal attributes and the demands or characteristics of their new work environment. Essentially, therefore, the PEF explains, in part, why—in spite of intense efforts at organizational integration—some employees cannot be integrated, and may explain why some groups of post-acquisition employees in this study did not have their job strain reactions reduced or as reduced as others'.

Perhaps the most important of these is the uniquely different role played by different components of social support in organizations. The two major components, superior's (or leader's) support and coworker (or colleague's) support negatively predicted wellbeing though not at the same degree. Superior's support actually contributed more to wellbeing than coworker support. This really did not come as a surprise given the predictably possible all-encompassing roles that superior's support could have played in the process. If the almost endless list of organizational leaders' responsibilities is considered, it may become obvious that such would not only overwhelm any other component of social support, but also that they are incompatible with not being supportive. Such responsibilities include ensuring effective and consistent communication with employees about organization's direction and plan (Stansfield et al., 2000, Giga et al., 2003; Verschoor, 2006); clarifying to employees how their work relates to the company's goals, and setting an example of integrity in the business and treating their subordinates with respect and fairness, as well as reinforcing their sense of pride in themselves and the organization (Verschoor, 2006). Others are making visions and values meaningful to followers by modeling them (Kouzes and Posner, 1995), ensuring the invention of new and better ways of running such firms, provision of assurances of security, especially job security, to help acquired employees tolerate their anxiety (Schein, 1984). Drawing on the finding in this study that superior's support reduced job strain more effectively than coworker support, it goes without saying that ability to guarantee all the leadership responsibilities listed in the forgone for post-acquisition employees may just be enough to answer the question as to the role of leaders in facilitating organizational integration and in ensuring that integration fosters employee wellbeing regardless of employees' typical unpleasant reactions to mergers and acquisitions (Marks & Cutcliffe, 1988; Haspeslagh and Jemison, 1991; Van Dam et al., 2008).

The overbearing nature of organizational leadership in the integration*job strain relationship also played out in the tests of proposed moderation. While it can be stated that coworker support did not interact with organizational integration to predict wellbeing in any meaningful way, superior's support did. The peculiarity of this interaction lies in the manner post-acquisition employees reacted to low organizational integration with the highest level of strain in the analysis despite enjoying high levels of supervisor support. This implies that high levels of had superior's support had their strongest softening or buffering influences on distress—to enhance wellbeing—only when the employees benefit highly from organizational integration. This is a huge departure from what theoretical and empirical literatures say on the matter. The buffering hypothesis, for example, stresses that the provision of social support will buffer the negative effects of stress on well-being (Cohen & Wills, 1985) which suggests—as backed by some studies—that social support is expected to guarantee wellbeing no matter the real or impending distress (e.g., Collins et al., 1993; Corrigan et al., 1994). One would

have been tempted to think that this applies only to overall social support but for the studies that situate low or lack of social support can result in high levels of psychological distress (Rugulies, 2005). The same negative outcomes, and even more severe form of distress applies, to situations of lack of supportive relationships at work, especially with one's boss (e.g., Beehr et.al, 1990; Cohen and Wills, 1985; Ganster et.al, 1986; Viswesvaran et.al, 1999) and lack of supportive supervision (Giga et al., 2003).

That superior's support and coworker support could operate on wellbeing in these different manners is an indication of the possible usefulness of, sometimes, looking at them differently, especially in studies of wellbeing where they are most relevant. Studies on wellbeing that involves support have, as a matter of tradition, concentrated on overall social or organizational support (e.g., House, 1981; Pearlin, et.al, 1981; Cohen & Wills, 1985; Ganster et.al, 1986; Kaufmann & Beehr, 1986; Thoits, 1986; Kirmeyer & Dougherty, 1988; Collins et al., 1993; Eisenberger et.al, 1997; Swanson & Power, 2001; Adams, 2003; Greer, 2005; Rugulies, 2005; Luszczynska & Cieslak, 2005; Ehigie & Otukoya, 2005; Harris et.al, 2007; Peelle, 2007; Asgari et.al, 2008; Lawal, 2012).

Implications for Practice

Human resource managers, administrators, and mergers/acquisitions consultants need to take advantage of the instrumentality of open, internal communication and cooperation, which organizational integration culture offers, in reducing the distrust, suspicion, stereotypes, prejudice with which acquired employees are usually treated. Where such employees feel that they have been accepted unconditionally and not at risk of lay-offs, their response to the stress of being acquired by another organization may not necessarily have negative health consequences.

Moreover, the help, especially by way of moral and emotional support, that acquired employees get from their new superiors in their new organization goes a long way to ensure that the employees are not devastated by the almost inevitable consequences of acquisition. As found in this study, such superiors who provide support should either handle or be significantly involved in the integration process. As the study also reveals, integration efforts are bound to be more beneficial in reducing the negative consequences of acquisition when employees see enjoy emotional and moral support from the same superiors who are making efforts to integrate them with their new organization.

VI. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study set out to examine the extent to which organizational integration would help post-acquisition employees deal with job strain that may result from the distress that are usually associated with merger/acquisitions. It also looked at the moderating influences of superior's support

and coworker support in this process, as well as possible interactions of each of them with organizational integration to influence job strain.

It was found as expected that job strain decreased significantly in response to effective organizational integration indicating that good integration efforts on the part of management of organizations can effectively reduce unpleasant, psychological and physical health consequences of working in an organization. Against this background, it is recommended that managements of merging organizations prioritize comprehensive integration programmes in their merger/acquisition plans and begin to implement them on employees as soon as the Memoranda of Understanding about the agreement have been signed. This will ensure that all employees learn all they need to know about their emerging organization: its culture, its structure, its organogram, and so on, prior to the implementation of the merger/acquisition plans.

The duo of superior's and coworker support also contributed to reducing job strain but at different degrees with superior's support helping a little bit more, compared to coworker support. This was an impetus to a major proposition of this study that, given its all-encompassing nature, superior's support, compared with coworker support, is more helpful to post-acquisition employees, particularly those who could not be properly integrated to the new organization and her stakeholders. Management experts, especially human-resource managers can capitalize on this finding to carefully select superiors or managers who would manage the change process to ensure that these managers are those that can be very highly supportive, helpful, considerate, and respectful to employees while implementing the change process and taking the employees through organizational integration.

Superior's support also determined who among the post-acquisition employees would have their wellbeing positively influenced by their organizational integration experiences. Specifically, it can be deduced that only when post-acquisition employees enjoy high superior's support that benefitting highly in organizational integration would improve their wellbeing the most. The reverse is the case in a situation where organizational integration is low as the worst level of wellbeing (in this study) was reported then. This implies that high superior's support without effective organizational integration can spell doom on employees' wellbeing. Therefore, a combination of effective organizational integration and good social support is also recommended as one of the best strategy to ensure that employees do not come down with physical and psychological illnesses due to their inability to overcome the challenges arising from mergers and acquisitions. Human-resource experts are also advised to tread with caution in trying to employ the instrumentality of leadership to avoid job strain. It may be helpful to always ensure that employees' integration with their colleagues and the entire operations of their organization is coordinated by managers who have been tested and proven to possess good

and supportive leadership attributes. As it would be obvious, having managers other than the ones employees are subordinated to handle organizational integration may be counterproductive as employees would still be at risk of poor wellbeing if such managers are unsupportive. In other words, organizational integration is not ideal for outsourcing or consultancy.

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