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THE LOUD IMPACT OF A QUIET EGO: HOW POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY INCREASES SALESPERSON PERFORMANCE AND WELL-BEING

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THE LOUD IMPACT OF A QUIET EGO:
HOW POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY INCREASES SALESPERSON PERFORMANCE
AND WELL-BEING

BY
JONATHAN ROSS GILBERT

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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IN
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY DISSERTATION

OF

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ABSTRACT

The role of business-to-business (B2B) sales professionals is adapting to meet ever-changing customer expectations. B2B buyers are now demanding more complex, customized solutions and more personalized after-sales support and service. This profound change in the nature of professional selling has spurred a global race to scale up digital platforms that seamlessly support buyer needs and expectations throughout the purchase journey. However, this emphasis on the marriage of technology and human interaction *prior to* the sale has created a dearth of attention to, and related scholarship on, the role of salesperson support *after* the sale [emphasis added]. The “quiet ego” (QE), a psychological construct that has previously been unexplored in the marketing and sales literature, may help to explain individual differences in the ability of salespeople to balance self-interest (transactional) with concern for others (relational). Two manuscripts explore the direct and indirect effects of QE on salesperson performance and well-being utilizing survey data from 330 B2B sales professionals engaged in a wide variety of industries across two continents (Europe = 200; Asia = 130). Confirmatory factor analysis was performed to confirm the validity of QE in a selling context and structural equation modeling was used to examine the hypothesized relationships between the independent and dependent variables. The first manuscript ported QE within the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions to explain and predict its impact on adaptive selling behavior (ASB) and salesperson performance (SP). QE was directly and positively associated with ASB and was indirectly related to SP through its relationship with ASB in the combined sample. Culture moderated these relationships in interesting and unexpected ways. Salespeople in collectivistic cultures (Asia) reported quieter egos compared to their counter-

parts in individualistic cultures (Europe). These higher QE scores resulted in a direct effect between QE and SP for the Asian sample and no relationship between QE and ASB. The second manuscript explored the potential mediating role of QE and psychological capital (PsyCap) in the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload (BSTO) and both SP and psychological well-being (PWB). PsyCap positively mediated the BSTO to SP and PWB pathways. The pathway from QE to PWB was positive but, counterintuitively, the link to SP was negative. Curvilinear effects for QE were identified such that silent and noisy egos were positively associated with SP, whereas quiet egos positively predicted PWB. Culture also positively moderated the relationship between BSTO and both QE and PsyCap. Implications of the findings for theoreticians and practitioners are discussed.

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If there is ever a zombie apocalypse, let alone a global pandemic, I am not only well prepared from binge-watching every movie and television show about ever made about “walkers” (during those rare moments of procrastination), but I also now know the four people I would gladly have by my side: Dr. Christy Ashley, Dr. Stefanie Boyer, Dr. Emilija Djurdjevic, and Dr. Brendan “Skip” Mark.

Dr. Christy Ashley has quite simply been a Jill of All Trades throughout my time as a doctoral student. Those roles included, but are not limited to, that of professor, advisor, co-author, supervisor, dissertation co-chair, and confidant. She is the epitome of what a true mentor is, and should be, at any high-quality PhD program. Dr. Ashley cares deeply about the success of all her students and spends countless hours in voluntary, extra-role behaviors helping administrators, colleagues, students, and staff to make the University of Rhode Island (URI) a preeminent teaching and research institution. Now, as she embarks on her new role as Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs at the College of Business, I can think of no better steward for the timeless task of revealing to young minds the joy of learning and its constant challenges.

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Suffice to say, I would literally neither be at the finish line nor gainfully employed if not for their nurturing care, sage advice, fruitful collaboration, and tireless advocacy. It is

impossible to imagine a better or more dynamic duo to chair a dissertation committee than those two.

Dr. Emilija Djurdjevic and Dr. Brendan “Skip” Mark round out the fantastic four who comprised my dissertation committee. Their unhesitating willingness to lend their expertise, unrivaled accessibility (even on short notice), and thoughtful critiques proved invaluable.

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DEDICATION

This capstone to the official end of my “career” as a student is dedicated to my immediate family – mother Susan, father Stephen, brother Preston, and niece Talia – who have graciously and patiently endured my tortuous educational path to happiness. Their love and support made it possible for me to chase new opportunities on a whim, travel the world, and live life without regrets.

Last, but certainly not least, this journey began with my always faithful, boundlessly energetic, and unconditionally loving best friend and companion: “Action” Jackson. My 14-year-old Hungarian Vizsla lost a hard and painful battle to cancer in 2017. He deserved better. You will be forever missed: “Until we meet again at the rainbow bridge.”

PREFACE

The customer experience doesn't end when the purchase has been made. In business-to-business (B2B), customers want to have known vendors they can turn to instead of having to find a new supplier every time they need something new. One of the keys to building those long-term relationships is through post-purchase support. Service means more than just making sure customers are happy with their purchases, although that is part of it. It also means helping customers find ways to work more efficiently with their new products and to constantly meet their needs. After-sales service includes staying in touch with customers and anticipating, if not knowing, their changing needs as the buyer's company grows and evolves. It also means providing troubleshooting assistance and continued education to use the products to their full potential. Providing trusted after-sales service ensures that the relationship will continue.

Many firms continue to increase salespeople's service expectations alongside selling responsibilities; however, evidence suggests this strategy is difficult to implement (Rapp, 2017). The seminal work of Ahearne, Jelinek, and Jones (2007) delineated salesperson service behaviors (SSBs) as only those support activities which take place after the point of the initial sale. This service-orientation complements sales in that superior customer service should increase sales and selling appropriate products that meet customer needs increases perceptions of service excellence (Zeithaml, 2000). The importance of post-sales service interactions was extended by Challagalla et al. (2009) to include various types of supplier-initiated contact after purchase. These proactive post-sales service (PPS) activities – prevention, education, and feedback seeking – were shown to increase both buyer satisfaction and quality of service in certain B2B contexts. Gonzalez et al. (2010) highlighted that the effective practice of SSBs and PPS doesn't prevent mistakes or problems and may

even increase issues resulting from interactions with the salesperson. The authors further extended the work of Ahearne et al. (2007) and Challagalla et al. (2009) to evince the benefits of a formal recovery management program to respond to and handle customer complaints.

Despite the growing recognition of the critical role of post-sale service on the salesperson-customer relationship (Agnohotri et al., 2017; Gonzalez et al., 2010), limited research examines the intrapersonal affect of maintaining dual roles on sales professionals over time. The increased time and attention devoted to solving buyer problems caused by the selling firm likely takes a significant emotional toll on B2B sales professionals.

In order to reduce the deleterious emotional, cognitive, and physiological responses to these stressors, an effective way to cope with demanding situations would be to reduce the frequency and intensity of defensive reactions. Many cognitive interventions target appraisal processes for this reason. While it is unrealistic to eliminate situations in stressful occupations that can give rise to self-protective motives and states, to the extent an individual can reduce the types of evaluative and judgmental thinking (about the self or others) that lead to unproductive emotions, personal and work outcomes can be bolstered. For example, a recent study (Abelson et al., 2014) found that in contrast to other forms of self-help, a compassionate focused self-identity was associated with more resilience to stressors as evidenced by a more dampened cortisol response.

Borrowing heavily from humanistic, organismic, and eudemonic perspectives on the self, Wayment and Bauer (2008) coined the term “quiet ego” in order to convey a “balanced” self-identity—an identity that is not excessively self-focused but also not excessively other-focused. With the quieted ego, there is more balance and integration of the self and others

in one's self-concept, which facilitates personal growth and a greater compassion for both the self and others (Wayment et al., 2015).

This dissertation includes two manuscripts inspired by the application of the quiet ego as a positive psychological construct to the sales research domain. The first manuscript, which was submitted for review at the *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management (JPSSM)*, conceptualizes and validates a link between the quiet ego and salesperson performance across cultures. Interestingly, this direct relationship held for collectivists (Asia) but operated indirectly through adaptive selling behaviors for individualists (Europe). *JPSSM* is the only peer-reviewed journal to focus exclusively on sales professionals and endeavors to publish articles on new topics such as this novel application of the quiet ego which promises to inform the recruitment, training, and evaluation of sales professionals.

The second manuscript, which was submitted for review at the *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology (JCCP)*, reinforces the centrality of an individual's psyche in B2B salesperson outcomes and extends the findings of the first paper by testing a process explanation for how psychological resources operate to buffer customer demands and promote both performance and well-being across cultures. *JCCP* focuses on the interrelations between culture and psychological processes which is well-suited for the unique findings from this cross-cultural comparative research. National culture moderated the relationship between boundary spanning task overload and psychological resources such that higher levels of sales and service demands were less depleting to collectivists (Asia) versus individualists (Europe). The result was that quieter (noisier) egos appear to facilitate better sales performance outcomes and salesperson psychological well-being in Asia (Europe).

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**THE (QUIET) EGO AND ITS SHADOW DYNAMICS: TRANSCENDING
SELF-INTEREST AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ADAPTIVE SELLING
IN EUROPE AND ASIA**

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Abstract

The quiet ego (QE) is a positive psychological construct that has previously been unexplored in the sales literature. QE refers to a set of characteristics that reflect a compassionate self-identity, an ability to balance self-interest with concerns for others. The author ports QE within the broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions to explain and predict its impact on adaptive selling behavior (ASB) and salesperson performance (SP). A cross-cultural study of QE utilized survey data from 330 B2B sales professionals engaged in a wide variety of industries across two continents (Europe = 200; Asia = 130). QE was directly and positively associated with ASB and was indirectly related to SP through its relationship with ASB in the combined sample. Culture moderated these relationships in interesting and unexpected ways. Salespeople in collectivistic cultures (Asia) reported quieter egos compared to their counterparts in individualistic cultures (Europe). These higher QE scores resulted in a direct effect between QE and SP for the Asian sample and no relationship between QE and ASB. Discussion focuses on potential reasons why ASB may be a more or less salient construct for salespeople depending on cultural context. Implications of the findings for theoreticians and practitioners are discussed.

Keywords: Quiet ego, Salespeople, Adaptive selling behavior, Broaden-and-build theory, Positive psychology

1. Introduction

“If nothing else, selling is an endless confrontation with truth, the truth about yourself and about others. It is raw and uncomfortable and personally exposing.”

~ Philip Delves Broughton (2012)

The popular notion of a salesperson is that they are professionally motivated by excessive self-interest. This persistent negative view of the selling profession is particularly problematic business-to-business (B2B) interactions where buyers are demanding more complex, customized solutions and more personalized after sales support and service (Castro-González & Bande, 2019; Steward et al., 2019). The changing role of B2B salespeople from selling solutions to cocreating value with buyers, both before and after the sale, suggests the need for a more social-centered approach (Ulaga & Kohli, 2018). Although B2B marketing, in general, and salesperson-customer relationships, in particular, require a new approach, salesperson recruitment and training continue to emphasize charisma, ambition, and strong egos that won't take 'no' for an answer. And like the brazen assurance of celebrities and social influencers, companies often encourage and even laud superstar sellers.

Research-to-date on the salesperson psyche, including the ego, is surprisingly limited. Early explorations of personality types, traits, and dispositions in the selling profession suggests that success was achieved through manipulative and self-serving behavior:

It is my conviction that the possessor of an effective sales personality is a habitual “wooer,” an individual who has a compulsive need to win and hold the affection

of others...[a]long with the wooing instinct, several less glamorous, more pedestrian qualifications are important: a high level of energy, abounding self-confidence, a chronic hunger for money, a well-established habit of industry, and a state of mind which regards each objection, resistance, or obstacle as a challenge. (McMurry, 1961, pp. 117-118)

This desire to win and be better than others, whether operationalized by aggressiveness, ego drive, trait competitiveness, or Machiavellianism, has been consistently linked to increased sales productivity and performance across a wide variety of sales roles and contexts (Bonney et al., 2020; Brewer, 1994; Brown et al., 1998; Comer & Dubinsky, 1985; Ricks & Fraedrich, 1999). However, not all salesperson actions and decisions are driven solely by the need for personal gratification.

In actuality, the ego has both positive and negative aspects. A series of studies found that the most successful salespeople were characterized by a balance between the need to conquer and the ability to understand the feelings of others (Greenberg & Greenberg, 1976, 1983, 1990-1991; Greenberg & Mayer, 1964; Ingram & LaForge, 1992). The caveat to these findings was that a greater degree of pushiness and manipulation (i.e., Machiavellianism) was required to close the deal (Greenberg & Mayer, 1964; Olshavsky, 1973; Willet & Pennington, 1966). Interestingly, attempts to isolate the impact of the ability to feel on sales performance have yielded mixed results (Dawson, 1992). For example, multidimensional approaches to the measurement and study of empathy, considered to be a bridge function of the ego (Ferreira, 1961), found both positive and negative direct effects on sales success and positive indirect effects through other constructs such as adaptive selling behavior (Aggarwal et al., 2005; Anaza et al., 2018; McBane, 1995).

The challenge of reconciling the apparent zero-sum conceptualization between self- and other-interested values is not unique to the sales literature. For example, one of the most widely used model of universal values also posits that self-enhancement and self-transcendent motives operate in opposition (Schwartz, 1992) and studies that have operationalized these values have done so in ways that perpetuate this perspective (Aelenei et al., 2020; Pantaléon, 2019; Roccas, 2003; Rudnev et al., 2018). However, philosophical and psychological conceptualizations of motivation have outlined both self-focused and other-focused values (Rokeach, 1973) and that the balanced and coordinated pursuit of self- and other-focused values is key to wisdom (Baltes et al., 2002). Furthermore, these authors argue that although there are likely situations in which these values may conflict, in the context of wisdom, pursuing one's own well-being at the expense of others is considered unwise (Baltes et al., 2002; Baltes & Staudinger, 2000).

Contemporary research in positive psychology endorses the primacy of self-other balance. This paper focuses on the “quiet ego” construct to reflect that important balanced motivational stance (Bauer & Wayment, 2008). Borrowing heavily from humanistic, organismic, and eudemonic perspectives on the self, the term “quiet ego” was introduced as a psychological characteristic adaptation (a domain of personality that focuses on values and motives) to describe a self-identity that is motivated by a balanced importance place on both self- and other-focused values as well as growth (Wayment & Bauer, 2008, 2017). Quiet ego characteristics reflect an ability to balance the light and dark sides of the psyche (Kaufman et al., 2019) which could enrich our understanding of the contours and consequences of a compassionate self-identity in sales.

The navigation between these two basic human motives is important, because optimal decision making is achieved when the ambition of the ego is channeled constructively

through humility and social attachments (Kaufman et al., 2019; Steenbarger, 2019). In fact, multiple studies have advocated for the study of positive psychological factors in sales research as an important lens through which to understand what drives critical thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals and organizations (see Skinner & Kelly, 2006, and Friend et al., 2016). The sales domain also extends the exploration of the impact of a strength-based approach to interactions that are external to the company (e.g., buyer-seller relationships).

To the best of this author's knowledge, no prior studies have used the quiet ego construct for research in the marketing or sales domain. This investigation endeavors to: (1) validate the quiet ego in a selling context; (2) examine the relationship between broad qualities of the self in relation to others over time and salesperson performance; (3) explore adaptive selling behavior as an indirect mechanism; and (4) determine if the theorized effects hold across various cultures and national boundaries.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. First, the quiet ego and broaden-and-build theory are briefly reviewed, and this review is used as the backdrop to explain why the research focuses on the quiet ego and adaptive selling behavior in a cross-cultural context. Next, the conceptual model is introduced and a set of hypotheses regarding the relationships between quiet ego, adaptive selling behavior, culture, and sales performance are developed. The hypotheses are then tested using a primary dataset consisting of survey responses from 330 salespeople within several B2B sectors in Europe and Asia. Lastly, the results and their implications for theory and practice are discussed.

2. Background

2.1 Foundations of the ego in a selling context

The term “ego” is widely recognized, yet often misunderstood, both at an academic and colloquial level. Freud (1957) conceptualized the human psyche as a tripartite structure consisting of the id, ego, and superego. The ego was described as the mediator between the unrestrained desires of the id and the rigid moral demands of the superego. This agency of mind, while important, belies a holistic understanding of the ego as an experienced *sense* [emphasis added] of self. Quite simply, in a selling context, the ego is best understood as the salesperson’s self-image. It’s their constructed, often inflated, personal identity that both sets them apart from everyone else and helps them to fit in. For example, “I am a good listener,” “I am an expert,” and “I am resilient.” This distorted, if not false, reality is neither inherently good nor bad. Different circumstances require different identities, and the consequences of those constructed selves depend on whether the associated behaviors are appropriate for a given context (Block & Kremen, 1996). Competitive, selfish, and aggressive egocentric behavior may promote adaptive outcomes in certain selling situations (Block & Block, 1980; Schill & Tata, 1988; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004).

The problem is that the ego is programmed to win. Human beings instinctively want to compare themselves to, and rank themselves against, other people (e.g., intelligence, wealth, and beauty). This competitive drive ensured physical survival in early evolutionary history, however, in contemporary society the incessant need for achievement is shadowed by self-doubt and self-criticism that negatively impact decision making,

acknowledgement of important others, and general happiness. In sales, having too big of an ego can undermine the ability of a seller to connect with, accurately understand, and meaningfully respond to the needs of a buyer.

A healthy ego brings together a coherent, realistic, and positive sense of self with reciprocal and satisfying interpersonal relationships (Blatt, 2008). It is a delicate and ongoing balance between freeing up the impulses enough to spark unbridled creativity and engage in deep levels of communication while curtailing antisocial behaviors and desires that may be personally destructive or offensive, if not harmful, to others (Block & Kremen, 1996).

2.2 The quiet ego and broaden-and-build theory

The balanced ego can be conceptualized along a spectrum anchored at one end by the quiet ego and at the other by the loud (noisy) ego (Kosloff et al., 2008). The noisy ego orients individuals toward the pursuit of self-interest and the deliberate imposition of their singularity and accompanying needs onto others. A quiet ego allows individuals to transcend personal concerns by facilitating a more objective and compassionate view of the self and others. This mindful check against the noisy ego promotes interdependence, values mutual outcomes, and enhances personal growth and development (Kosloff et al., 2008).

Bauer and Wayment (2008) refer to the process of quieting the ego as “the individual who routinely transcends egotism as well as the need to turn down a few notches the booming volume of egotism, on *both individual and cultural levels* [emphasis added]” (p. 7). The authors frame the quiet ego as a higher order construct encompassing four basic

components or positive qualities: detached awareness, interdependence, compassion, and growth.

Detached awareness refers to understanding a situation in the very moment without regard for how that interpretation affects one's own self-importance (Brown & Ryan, 2003). This detachment from the ego attenuates critical appraisals of one's self and allows a person to be more impartial and receptive toward what they might learn about themselves or others (Bauer & Wayment, 2008; Brown & Ryan, 2003).

Inclusive identification refers to recalibrating one's interactions with others to ensure a balanced relationship whereby neither person sacrifices themselves nor compromises their values. This integrated interpretation of the self and others requires an awareness and understanding of other people's perspectives; not simply tolerating but moving beyond differences to acceptance and inclusion.

Perspective-taking refers to a feeling that arises when observing another person in need and that motivates an authentic desire to help. This broad emotional response is closely related with interdependence in that the pursuit of compassionate goals is often described as a "defining characteristic of an interdependent self that prioritizes harmonious relationships over individual achievement" (Niiya & Crocker, 2009, p. 1). Bauer and Wayment (2008) suggested that both interdependence and compassion work together in a virtuous cycle to promote connection and cooperation.

Growth-mindedness refers to an ongoing and genuine concern for understanding and actively helping others in a positive way. This long-term orientation views present conflicts as an acceptable part of the process that doesn't permanently threaten or irrevocably devalue one's own worth or abilities. This prosocial kind of development over time is facilitated by heightened levels of the other three components of the quiet ego.

The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (BBT; Fredrickson, 1998, 2001) elucidates the purpose behind each of these four qualities and how they influence the personal and social assets that promote salesperson performance. Underlying this approach are two key presumptions: (1) nonspecific action tendencies; and (2) thought-action tendencies (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001). Positive emotions create urges to act, however, these impulses are more generalized and often lead to changes in thinking before manifesting in specific behaviors. In absence of a threat, Fredrickson (1998) suggested that positive emotions “broaden the momentary thought–action repertoire rather than narrowing it” (p. 304) and subsequently build the personal resources of an individual. For example, when a salesperson is in the flow of their work, they are engaged (detached awareness) and truly enjoying what they are doing, which leads to explorative behaviors (inclusive identification and perspective-taking) that uncover new information relevant to their activity and expands the self (growth) by integrating these new knowledge structures that can be drawn at later points in time.

In summary, BBT delineates positive emotions as broadening an individual’s scope of attention, cognition, and actions so that they can build up their resources over time through the processes of learning and social connection. In a sales context, these expanded personal resources might include physical resources (e.g., multitasking), intellectual resources (e.g., knowledge structures for how to problem-solve), or social resources (e.g., building rapport with customers). These positive emotions may even mitigate, if not undo, negative emotions while serving as protective factors against the psychological and physical effects that salespeople are at risk for due to the demanding and isolated nature of their jobs.

2.3 Quiet ego and adaptive selling

Change is inevitable and, ironically, the status quo in hypercompetitive international markets. Firms continuously reinvent existing products and services in response to the rapidly evolving needs or wants of customers and in a concerted effort to differentiate products and services from competitive offerings. The need for underlying processes that are dynamic, iterative, and responsive to change create an inherent tension for both sales managers and sales professionals in a business-to-business (B2B) context. Structure is often considered to be a necessary evil to ensure that salespeople keep to the script in an effort to closely align marketing activities with strategic organizational objectives and achieve transactional sales goals (Beeler et al., 2017). However, this level of organization can also be an impediment to the frequent disruptions created by unanticipated buyer behavior and competitor actions (Kim & Jung, 2018); palpable shifts which are magnified on the global stage.

One potential solution, espoused in the sales literature, is to train salespeople to have the ability to adapt to their customers' ever-changing needs. Adaptive selling is "the altering of sales behaviors during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation" (Weitz et al., 1986, p. 175). In fact, the most effective salespeople cultivate essential character traits and flex their skillsets to meet the unique needs and wants of buyers (Weitz et al., 1986).

This adaptability is a seemingly intuitive, yet remarkably elusive concept that transcends sales and marketing relationships. Most sales researchers and practitioners are

conceptually familiar with the Darwinistic perspective of natural selection whereby organisms undergo a series of advantageous biological changes over time through the replication of traits that ensure survival in fixed or dynamic environments (Darwin, 1859).

Modern neuroscience research extends our understanding of adaptation as more than just reactionary behavior. The relevancy to sales is that adaptation is hardwired into basic brain functioning. Parr and Friston (2017) suggested that neural circuits act by Bayesian-like inference, presenting subjective experience informed by previous experience. Similarly, research on the specific subject of adaptation in sales has identified discrete regions of activity that may explain sales performance (Dietvorst et al., 2009).

Psychological concepts elucidated by both the Broaden and Build and Quiet Ego theories suggest that one's psychological mindset can favor or interfere with adaptability. For example, previous research has found that quiet ego characteristics are associated with more open-mindedness, less rigid thinking, and more tolerance for others, psychological orientations that could interfere with an individual's adaptability (Wayment et al., 2015).

Adaptive selling is therefore conceptualized as a trainable skill that can help salespeople do their job better. In a contemporary sales context, these adaptations can be framed as a set of learned behaviors that strengthen the ability of sales professionals to uniquely anticipate and opportunely solve business problems for individual buyers (Weitz et al., 1986).

2.4 Quiet ego and culture

Researchers presume that the benefits of adaptability extend to international business contexts where values, assumptions, and beliefs may differ from domestic markets. Cultural adaptation refers to “those instances in which the salesperson alters his or her behaviors based on the cultural background of the customer” (Hansen et al., 2011).

Human beings are biologically adapted for culture (Tomasello, 1999) and both animal research and human studies in neuroscience have suggested that cultural traditions may be universal (Gluck et al., 2016; Pinker, 2002). However, because separate cultures develop in separate ecological contexts, different worldviews and beliefs are taught (Kitayama & Park, 2010).

While all people have the capacity for the same adaptation, how we are raised teaches us different customs and beliefs (Pinker, 2002). This has important implications for the measurement of adaptive selling behaviors, where different expressions of beliefs and customs should not be conflated with different capacity for adaptation.

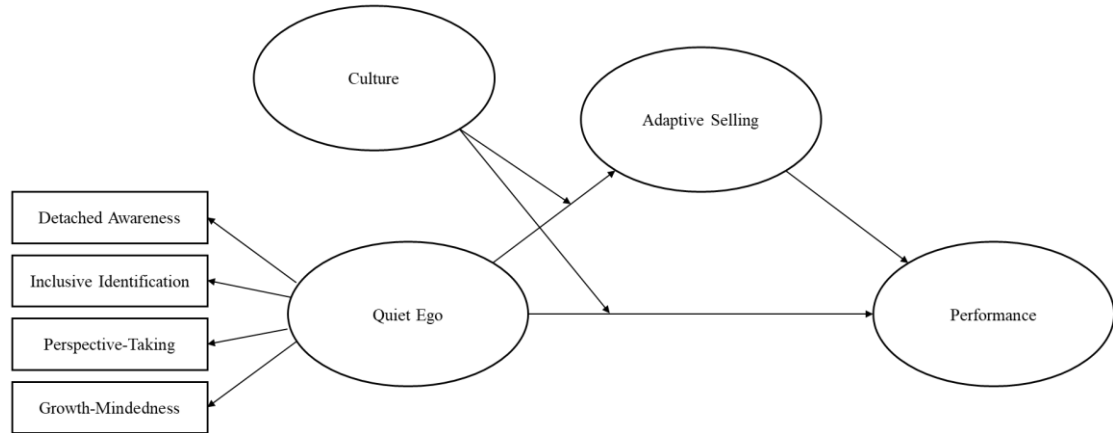
3. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

The aim is to explore the effects of quiet ego and adaptive selling behaviors on salesperson performance (see Figure 1). This study complements prior research on quiet ego by focusing on (1) the applicability of quiet ego to the sales domain, (2) the influence of individual salesperson quiet ego characteristics on adaptive selling behaviors and sales performance, (3) the mediating role of adaptive selling behaviors between quiet ego and

sales performance, and (4) the moderating effect of culture on the relationship between quiet ego and adaptive selling behaviors.

Figure 1

Conceptual Model



Note. Age, gender, sales experience, sales tenure, race, and education served as the control variables.

3.1 Quiet ego and sales performance

Although the quiet ego, as a higher order construct, has not been studied in the marketing domain, concepts related to its four qualities have been operationalized in contemporary sales research. Conceptually related antecedents linked to sales performance include: emotional intelligence and self-monitoring (detached awareness); gratitude, cooperation, and collaboration (inclusive identification); social astuteness and empathy (perspective-taking); and growth mindset and future orientation (growth-mindedness).

Detached awareness refers to the ability to thoughtfully observe the self and others without judgment (Wayment & Bauer, 2017). Being truly present in the moment would

be highly beneficial in a selling context where awareness and focus facilitates active listening to customer requirements and greater sensitivity to customer problems. Emotional intelligence, a multidimensional construct that includes the awareness to manage emotions and how they may be interpreted by others, was associated with increased sales performance (Rojell et al., 2006). Similarly, self-monitoring, the ability to consciously monitor emotions and respond to others appropriately, was found to positively predict sales performance through self-efficacy (Panagopoulos & Ogilvie, 2015).

Inclusive identification refers to the ability to see one's self as both independent from, yet reliant upon others (Wayment & Bauer, 2017). This interdependence is important in sales where buyers and sellers seek mutually beneficial relationships without sacrificing who they are or compromising their values. Gratitude, a deep appreciation for others, indirectly predicted positive customer outcomes through prosocial salesperson behaviors (Mangus et al., 2017). Cooperation, the ability to maximize outcomes for both the self and others, has consistently shown a strong and positive association with customer relationship quality, loyalty, and referrals (Lussier & Hall, 2018; Palmatier et al., 2006). Collaboration, the act of working together to obtain an outcome valued by all, has been positively linked to building customer rapport and sales performance (Kaski et al., 2018; Murphy & Coughlan, 2018).

Perspective-taking refers to the potential to take a genuine interest in and contemplate different points of views (Wayment & Bauer, 2017). This capacity is critical in sales where customers want to be heard and trust is established through the perceived quality of verbal and nonverbal communication. Social astuteness, the ability to intuit the motivations of others and respond accordingly, has been directly and indirectly linked to increased salesperson task performance and objective sales performance (Dugan, Rouziou,

et al., 2019; Guidice & Mero, 2012). Empathy, the ability to understand and feel for a person through their frame of reference, has been shown to have mixed effects on sales performance (Aggarwal et al., 2005; McBane, 1995). However, recent research suggested that empathy operates indirectly to enhance sales success (Anaza et al., 2018). Empathy (understanding and feeling) and compassion (desire to help based on that understanding and feeling) are often conflated which may help to explain discrepancies in the findings. The quiet ego is a compassionate form of self-identity (Bauer & Wayment, 2008) and, to the best of this author's knowledge, no prior studies have explored investigated delineated empathy and compassion in a sales context.

Growth-mindedness refers to the ability to see challenges as opportunities for personal development and growth in others over time (Wayment & Bauer, 2017). This long-term orientation is essential in relational selling where short-term solutions often predominate at the expense of learning and co-creation of value in the future. Growth mindset, the belief that abilities and talents can be improved over time, have been demonstrated to increase performance across a wide array of contexts (Dweck, 2006) including enhanced selling abilities (Novell et al., 2016). Future orientation, the extent to which a person plans ahead and considers the consequences to self and others before acting, has been shown to buffer salesperson deviance and positively impact salesperson service behaviors (Jelinek & Ahearne, 2006).

Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1. Salespeople with quieter egos demonstrate higher levels of sales performance.

3.2 Quiet ego and adaptive selling behaviors

Although the relationship between the quiet ego and adaptive selling is previously unexplored, a number of conceptually related constructs have been strongly and positively linked to these behaviors such as: introspection and mindfulness (detached awareness); interaction involvement and authentic pride (inclusive identification); empathy and cultural intelligence (perspective-taking); and learning orientation and improvisational behavior (growth-mindedness).

Detached awareness allows a salesperson to be focused and tuned in to what they are thinking and feeling during situations of change, novelty, and uncertainty. Introspection of behavior, the process of being aware of contemplating one's own thoughts, increased the use of adaptive selling behaviors (Porter & Inks, 2000). Similarly, mindfulness, the process of being attentive to and fully aware of the moment without judgment, had positive direct and indirect effects on adaptive selling behavior (Charoensukmongkol, 2020; Charoensukmongkol & Suthatorn, 2020).

Inclusive identification promotes information sharing and feedback that facilitates understanding of current and future customer needs. Interaction involvement, attentive listening to and engagement with others in the environment, was found to be positively associated with adaptiveness in sales presentations (Boorom et al., 1998). Self-evaluation of pride, a social emotion by nature, also happens within this context of sales presentations. Specifically, pride was found to increase salespersons' adaptive selling strategies, effort, and self-efficacy (Verbeke, 2004).

Perspective-taking helps a salesperson tap into the mind of the customer to understand their viewpoint and adjust to their needs and expectations accordingly. Empathy is

the capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing and has been consistently and positively linked to adaptive selling (Anaza, 2018; Bush et al., 2001; Limbu et al., 2016). This ability extends to being acutely aware of customers who are from or operate in other contexts (e.g., groups or geographic regions). Cultural intelligence, the ability to recognize and act upon cues across cultures, has been demonstrated to increase the use of adaptive selling behaviors by sales professionals in the field (Charoensukmongkol, 2020) and sales students in the classroom (Delpechitre & Baker, 2017).

Growth-mindedness furthers learning and helps salespeople to make novel connections between ideas that result in innovative solutions to customer problems. Positive direct and indirect links have been established between learning orientation and adaptive selling (Itani et al., 2017; Park & Holloway, 2003; Sujana et al., 1994). This disposition to actively explore and seek information from others is the springboard to improvisational behavior, the ability to adjust on the fly, which has also been shown to increase adaptive selling (Charoensukmongkol & Suthatorn, 2020).

To summarize these expected relationships, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. Salespeople with quieter egos demonstrate higher levels of adaptive selling behavior.

3.3 Adaptive selling behaviors and sales performance

Adaptive selling falls within a broad set of knowledge, skills, abilities, and others (KSAOs) that has been strongly and positively linked to individual salesperson performance across multiple studies and decades (Rapp & Beeler, 2021; Verbeke et al., 2011). There are two components to adaptive selling: beliefs and behaviors.

A specific type of salesperson self-efficacy that best reflects the increased need to adapt or tailor the selling approach to the behavior of the customer is referred to as adaptive selling confidence (ASC). Adaptive selling confidence is defined as the “salesperson’s belief in his or her capability to use a variety of different sales approaches and make adjustments in the message in response to the customer’s reactions” (Sujan et al., 1994).

Román & Iacobucci (2010) synthesized the literature on adaptive selling to conceptualize and simultaneously test a variety of antecedent and outcome variables including customer relational variables. The authors delineated adaptive selling confidence (ASC) and adaptive selling behavior (ASB). Adaptive selling beliefs do not directly influence sales performance, but behavior does (Marks et al., 1996). ASB also manifests the balance of the needs of others with the self in that it cultivates and maintains long-term relationships in response to changing customer needs (Franke & Park, 2006).

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. Salespeople who engage in more adaptive selling behavior demonstrate higher levels of sales performance.

3.4 Quiet ego and sales performance: mediating role of adaptive selling behaviors

Adaptive selling has been shown to be an important mediator between a wide range of predictor variables and sales performance. Many of those antecedents are conceptually related to at least one of the four facets of the quiet ego.

Correlates of detached awareness operate through adaptive selling to increase sales performance such as self-monitoring (Wang et al., 2021), mindfulness (Charoensukmongkol, 2020), and thought self-leadership (Singh et al., 2017). Higher levels of engagement and lower levels of defensiveness increase the use of adaptive selling behaviors which enhances sales performance.

Parallels to inclusive identification also operate through adaptive selling to increase sales performance such as deep acting (Wang et al., 2016) and customer orientation (Goad & Jaramillo, 2014). The more genuine and intentional the salesperson is in aligning their goals with the customer, the more adaptable their selling behaviors which leads to increased sales performance.

Perspective taking is embodied in empathy which has been shown to indirectly effect sales performance through adaptive selling (Locander et al., 2014, 2020). Greater understanding of an alternate point of view and effort to understand why customers feel the way they do is associated with greater use of adaptive selling behaviors which then positively impacts sales performance.

Similarly, aspects of growth-mindedness work through adaptive selling to boost sales performance such as learning orientation (Goad & Jaramillo, 2014) and improvisational behavior (Charoensukmongkol & Suthatorn, 2020). Salespeople who proactively seek out information from customers and incorporate that knowledge into their worldview are able to spontaneously exhibit more adaptive selling behaviors over time which increases sales performance and customer commitment.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4. Adaptive selling behavior mediates the positive effect of a quiet ego on sales performance.

3.5 Quiet ego, adaptive selling behaviors, and sales performance: moderating role of culture

Previous research on B2B sales indicates that salespeople from collectivist cultures tend to prioritize shared goals between sellers and buyers, whereas salespeople from individualist cultures tend to prioritize opportunity for personal gains (Gu et al., 2019). This distinction is important because if an adaptive salesperson from the United States were to try to sell to a Chinese business, they may inadvertently adapt their sales pitch in a way that is insensitive to the cultural expectations of the Chinese audience. This kind of cultural distance has been identified as a barrier to effective sales performance, so understanding the cultural nuance is important for successful international business interactions (Gu et al., 2019).

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5a. Culture moderates the relationship between quiet ego and performance such that salespeople in collectivist cultures have quieter egos which increases performance when compared to salespeople in individualistic cultures.

H5b. Culture moderates the mediated relationship such that salespeople in collectivist cultures with quieter egos engage in more adaptive selling behaviors which subsequently increases performance.

4. Research method

4.1 *Sample and data collection*

The hypotheses were tested using a unique data set comprised of survey responses collected from 330 B2B salespeople representing a wide array of industries in Europe ($n = 200$; 60.6%) and Asia ($n = 130$; 39.4%). European participants were recruited through an online survey panel and screened for both native English speaking and full-time employment selling to businesses. Asian subjects were identified through CEOs enrolled in an executive MBA program in the Republic of China (Taiwan). The executives were asked to share the online survey with members of their salesforce. Participants were subsequently screened for both native Mandarin speaking and full-time employment selling to businesses.

Table 1 provides summary statistics for the combined sample. The majority of participants self-identified as either Caucasian (52.42%) or Asian (43.33%). There was a balance between male (55.15%) and female participants (44.24%). Ages ranged from 18 to 70, with most participants in their 20s to 50s ($M = 38.92$ years, $SD = 13.16$ years). Sales experience and tenure were similar, with most participants indicating early-to-mid career status (experience: $M = 8.09$, $SD = 7.94$; tenure, $M = 7.17$, $SD = 7.80$).

4.2 *Steps to mitigate common method variance*

Pairwise correlations were examined (see Table 2). There was a large correlation between person of color racial identity and quiet ego ($\rho = 0.71$), however, this was likely

due to the sampling design. All participants in the Chinese sample were not white, and previous research has indicated that the concept of quiet ego is more salient in East Asian cultures. A larger concern was that there may be a subgroup of older, highly educated, and highly experienced participants, who also tended to self-report high levels of quiet ego (i.e., correlations between these variables > 0.45). Regardless, despite occasionally large correlations, the first eigenvalue only accounted for 31.03% of the variance. Harman’s single factor test indicated unacceptable fit to the data (i.e., CFI = 0.67, RMSEA = 0.186, 90% CI [0.171, 0.202]). This result provided insufficient evidence for common method variance, supporting the validity of the analysis.

Table 1
Sample Statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Skew	Kurtosis
PERF	4.82	0.28	1.25	7	-0.41	0.35
AS	5.34	1.19	1	7	-1.25	1.73
QE	5.05	0.69	2.93	6.79	-0.28	-0.03
Sales experience	8.09	7.94	0	47	1.85	3.97
Sales tenure	7.17	7.80	0	40	1.62	2.03
Age	38.92	13.16	18	70	0.29	-1.13

Variable	Level	N	%
Region	Europe	200	60.6%
	Asia	130	39.4%
Race	White	173	52.42
	Asian	143	43.33
	Black or African American	2	0.61
	Other	2	0.61
Gender identity	Male	182	55.15
	Female	146	44.24
	Non-gender binary	2	0.61
Education	Bachelor's degree or less	183	55.45
	Master's degree or more	147	44.55

Table 2*Correlation Matrix*

Correlations	PERF	AS	QE	Sales exp	Sales ten	Edu	Age	Gender	Race
PERF	1								
AS	0.22*	1							
QE	0.19*	0.25*	1						
Sales experience	0.15*	-0.1	0.11	1					
Sales tenure	0.09	0.02	0.38*	0.66*	1				
Education	0.06	0.07	0.42*	0.12*	0.27*	1			
Age	0.13*	0.08	0.56*	0.56*	0.56*	0.45*	1		
Female gender identity	-0.02	-0.10	-0.06	-0.04	0.00	-0.1	-0.08	1	
Not white racial identity	0.05	0.18*	0.71*	0.09	0.39*	0.44*	0.52*	-0.05	1

4.3 Measures

All measures used in the study are well-established in the sales and psychology literature (see Appendix B). Before answering the survey, the respondent saw the following statement printed before each construct in the salesperson survey: “Below are statements about you with which you may agree or disagree. Using the following Likert scale, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.” Likewise, the following statement was printed prior to self-reported sales performance: “Below are statements that describe different aspects of your job performance. Using the following Likert scale, indicate your level of performance for each category. Please be truthful.” Experience was operationalized as the number of years that the salesperson had worked in a sales position. Tenure was measured as the number of years that the salesperson had been employed in a sales role with their current employer. For the latent constructs, the original measures – quiet ego (Wayment et al., 2015), adaptive selling (Spiro & Weitz, 1990), and sales performance (Behrman & Perreault, 1982; Peasley et al., 2020) – were retained for the Europe sample and translated into the target language (traditional Mandarin) for the Asia sample.

The 'Quiet Ego Scale' (QES; Wayment et al., 2015) measured the quiet ego as a higher order construct comprised of its more concrete subdimensions: detached awareness, inclusive identification, perspective-taking, and growth-mindedness. These qualities are referred to as the four facets of psychosocial thinking in that they promote a harmonized stance between the self and others as well as adaptive development over time. The QES was positioned to assess individual readiness to think, feel, and behave in ways that are conducive toward balance and growth. Extant psychological scales that measured each of the proposed quiet ego characteristics were pooled and analyzed in multiple studies to select and validate items for the final measure. A relatively small number of items from the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale (MAA; Brown & Ryan, 2003), the Allo-Inclusive Identity Scale (AI; Leary et al., 2008), the Perspective Taking subscale of the Davis Interpersonal Reactivity Scale (Davis, 1983), and the Ryff Personal Well-Being Scale (PWB; Ryff, 1989) were able to represent the theorized qualities. The resultant 14-item scale showed adequate reliability across the study samples (coefficient alpha for total sample = .77). All items were assessed on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Higher scores on the QES are associated with an authentic identity that incorporates others without losing the self.

Adaptive selling was measured using behavioral items from the adaptive selling scale (ADAPTS; Spiro & Weitz, 1990). ADAPTS consists of both adaptive selling beliefs and adaptive selling behaviors (Marks et al., 1996), however, given that the conceptual model focuses on individual quiet ego characteristics and subsequent selling actions, behaviors are more germane than beliefs. The three-item scale ($\alpha = .87$) assesses a salesperson's use of adaptive behaviors when interacting with customers (e.g., "I like to experiment with different sales approaches," "I am very flexible in the selling approach that I use," and "I

try to understand how one customer differs from another”). Prior sales research validated this adapted scale across multiple selling contexts (Agnihotri et al., 2017; Itani et al., 2017). All items were assessed on a 7-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Greater use of adaptive selling behaviors is associated with an increased ability to respond to changes in customer needs.

Subjective performance was measured by a self-reported sales performance measure developed by Peasley et al. (2020; adapted from Behrman & Perreault, 1982). The four-item scale ($\alpha = .85$) assesses salesperson perceptions of their accomplishments across different types of sales activities (e.g., “I am exceeding sales objectives and targets,” “I am generating new customer sales,” “I am generating repeat customer sales,” and “Compared to the average salesperson in my firm, I would rate my performance as...”). Peasley et al. (2020) noted that self-reported measures of sales performance are a reliable proxy for actual sales performance. All items were assessed on a 7-point scale from 1 (far below average) to 7 (far above average).

Culture was measured using Hofstede’s (1980) individualism-collectivism (I-C) dimension. The I-C index assigns values between 0 and 100. Higher values are attributed to individualistic cultures whereas lower values indicate more collectivist cultures. Dummy variables were created for the Europe (0) and Asia (1) given that countries in those regions tend to be labeled as individualistic and collectivistic, respectively.

4.4 Covariates

Additionally, several control variables were collected: sales experience, sales tenure, education level, age, and gender. Sales experience was self-reported as the total number of

years in the sales profession. Sales tenure was assessed as the total number of years that the salesperson has been employed full-time in a sales position at their current employer. Education level, age and gender were also self-reported. Males were coded 0 and females were coded 1.

4.5 Analytical approach

Path analysis was used (Harlow, 2014). This method maximizes a set of regression parameters to the variance covariance matrix of a dataset to model the associations between specified variables. Inference is based on chi square tests, by assuming a path is zero, and identifying whether or not that assumption significantly decreases the fit of the model to the data. Additionally, individual regression parameter estimates can be tested on a normal distribution to identify if the specific association is significant (Harlow, 2014).

The focus of this analysis was a mediation model, which jointly estimates the path from an independent variable (quiet ego), to an intermediary or “mediator” variable (adaptive selling), and then to an outcome variable (sales performance). The possibility of cultural moderation between quiet ego and each of the dependent variables was also considered. Because quiet ego is a more salient concept within eastern cultures when compared with western cultures, it was of interest to test for heterogeneous associations with the quiet ego variable. Moderation analysis estimates an additional path coefficient representing the unique association between the predictor and the outcome attributable for the Eastern (Chinese) sample. The total effect for the Chinese sample then is the sum of the

average effect and the additional parameter. Standard error for the total effect was estimated by bootstrapping which provided an indication of the extent to which mediation was similar between cultures.

Several covariates were included, specifically: sales experience, sales tenure, education, age, and gender identity. These were included to control for extraneous confounding on adaptive selling and performance. Further, random intercepts were estimated by respondent continent to avoid violating the assumption of independence. There was potential concern that including so many covariates would run the risk of common method variance (CMV). CMV is the problem of multicollinearity due to similarity of measurement, here as self-reported questionnaires. Correlations between the variables were examined, and the eigenvalues for the correlation matrix were calculated. If the first eigenvalue accounts for more than 50% of the variance, this result is an indication of possible CMV. Additionally, Harman's single factor test was used, by estimating a confirmatory factor analysis model (CFA) with all variables loading onto a single factor. If this model has acceptable fit, then this may be evidence of CMV (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Lastly, the variance estimates for adaptive selling and sales performance were constrained to their sample estimates within the model. This was done because the full model as it was designed would have had zero degrees of freedom, which is uninterpretable. The variance parameters were not of primary interest, so applying these two constraints increased the degrees of freedom to two.

5. Results

5.1 Measurement validation

All variables were examined for excessive skew and kurtosis (i.e., $|\text{skew}| > 1.0$, kurtosis > 3.0 ; see Table 1). Most variables were approximately normally distributed. Sales experience and tenure indicated that most participants were younger, however the sample estimates were not outside of typical research standards (Harlow, 2014). The primary constructs of quiet ego, adaptive selling, and sales performance were operationalized as aggregate measures. As a result, coefficient omega was estimated for each of the composite scales. In all cases, scale reliability was strong ($\omega > 0.85$).

Because the quiet ego scale is new to sales research, a more detailed assessment of psychometric reliability and validity was performed before continuing to the analysis. This was accomplished using confirmatory factor analysis (Harlow, 2014). All items were specified to load onto four factors for their corresponding subscales: detached awareness, inclusive identification, perspective-taking, and growth-mindedness. Additionally, a hierarchical factor was estimated for each of the four subscales all loading onto one construct of quiet ego. This was done because the analysis operationalized quiet ego as a single factor trait composed of the four subtraits. Lastly, because there was structure to the sampling, random intercepts were estimated by continent. Model fit was estimated, and coefficient omega was calculated to ensure appropriate measurement. Results are provided in Table 3.

The fit of the model to the data was reasonable but not strong. The CFI of 0.92 ($> .93$ is well-fitting; see Byrne, 1994) and SRMR of 0.082 ($< .08$ is “good fit”; see Hu &

Bentler, 1999) were within widely accepted research limits, however the upper limit of the RMSEA of 0.092 (90% CI [0.080, 0.104]) was just outside of preferred values (0.01, 0.05, and 0.08 to indicate excellent, good, and mediocre fit, respectively; see MacCallum et al., 1996). All of the individual items, with the exception of one, had positive loadings that were significant ($p < 0.001$), and large ($\lambda > 0.50$). For subscales, omega reliability was slightly lower than would have been preferred (omega from 0.67 to 0.70). That said, stronger reliability was identified for the hierarchical construct of quiet ego, for which reliability was good (omega = 0.77; George & Mallery, 2003). The inclusive identification, perspective-taking, and growth-mindedness subscales all had large positive loadings ($\lambda > 0.70$) that were significant ($p < 0.001$). The detached awareness subscale, however, had a small and nonsignificant loading ($\lambda = 0.10$, $p = 0.406$). This indicates that the use of this scale as an operationalization of quiet ego in this analysis is appropriate, however it may underrepresent detached awareness.

Table 3

Psychometric Evaluation

Item	Loading	Z	p	Uniqueness	Omega reliability
<u>Detached awareness</u>					
QE2 I find myself doing things without paying much attention.*	0.70	10.68	<0.001	0.51	0.70
QE6 I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.*	0.51	3.57	<0.001	0.74	
QE10 I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.*	0.77	9.13	<0.001	0.41	
<u>Inclusive identification</u>					
QE3 I feel a connection to all living things.	0.72	5.72	<0.001	0.49	0.67
QE7 I feel a connection with strangers.	0.54	8.61	<0.001	0.71	
QE12 I feel a connection to people of other races.	0.63	8.66	<0.001	0.60	
<u>Perspective-taking</u>					
QE4 Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.	0.82	3.48	0.001	0.34	0.68
QE8 When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to put myself in his or her shoes for a while.	0.71	4.16	<0.001	0.49	
QE11 I sometimes find it difficult to see things from another person's point of view.*	0.13	1.01	0.313	0.98	
QE13 I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.	0.62	3.39	0.001	0.62	
<u>Growth-mindedness</u>					
QE1 I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world.	0.52	3.13	0.002	0.73	0.69
QE5 For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth.	0.84	4.18	<0.001	0.30	
QE9 I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time.	0.64	5.258	<0.001	0.59	
QE14 When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years.*	0.37	3.66	<0.001	0.86	
<u>Hierarchical factor</u>					
Detached awareness	0.10	0.83	0.406	0.99	0.77
Inclusive identification	0.83	6.03	<0.001	0.32	
Perspective-taking	0.86	3.86	<0.001	0.26	
Growth-mindedness	0.76	4.85	<0.001	0.42	

*Item is reverse scored

5.2 Direct and indirect effects

Model fit comparisons are provided in Table 4, and path coefficients in Table 5. The best fitting model was the full effects model with strong fit (i.e., $X^2/DF < 5$, $CFI > 0.90$, $RMSEA$, $SRMR < 0.100$; Harlow, 2014). The chi square test was not significant ($X^2(2, N$

= 330) = 2.12, $p = 0.346$, $X^2/DF = 1.06$), the CFI rounded to one (CFI = 1.00), and the RMSEA and SRMR were close to zero (RMSEA = 0.014, 90% CI [0.000, 0.070]; SRMR = 0.022). These values indicate a very close fit of the model to the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999; MacCallum et al., 1996; Steiger, 2007). The direct effects and mediation effects only models both had worse fit (e.g., $X^2/DF > 4.00$, RMSEA > 0.08), although the indicators suggest an acceptable fit (e.g., CFI > 0.90, SRMR < 0.100; see Byrne, 1994, and Hu & Bentler, 1999). The focus of the interpretation of hypothesis tests will be on the full model because it was clearly the best fitting (see Figure 2).

First paths were examined from quiet ego to sales performance (H1) and from quiet ego to adaptive selling (H2). H1 was not supported. The direct path from quiet ego to sales performance was not significant and small ($\gamma = 0.05$, $p = 0.201$; Cohen, 1988). However, support was identified for H2, quiet ego was positively associated with adaptive selling behavior on average ($\gamma = 0.20$, $p < 0.001$). The path from adaptive selling to sales performance was examined next, H3. A statistically significant association was identified ($\beta = 0.20$, $p < 0.001$). H4 assessed each link in the mediational chain. The pattern of results indicated full mediation of the effect of quiet ego on sales performance via adaptive selling, on average, in support of H4. Additionally, the result that the full model was a much better fit to the data than the model where mediation was restricted to zero further supports H4 ($X^2(4, N = 330) = 40.97$, $p < 0.001$; Harlow, 2014).

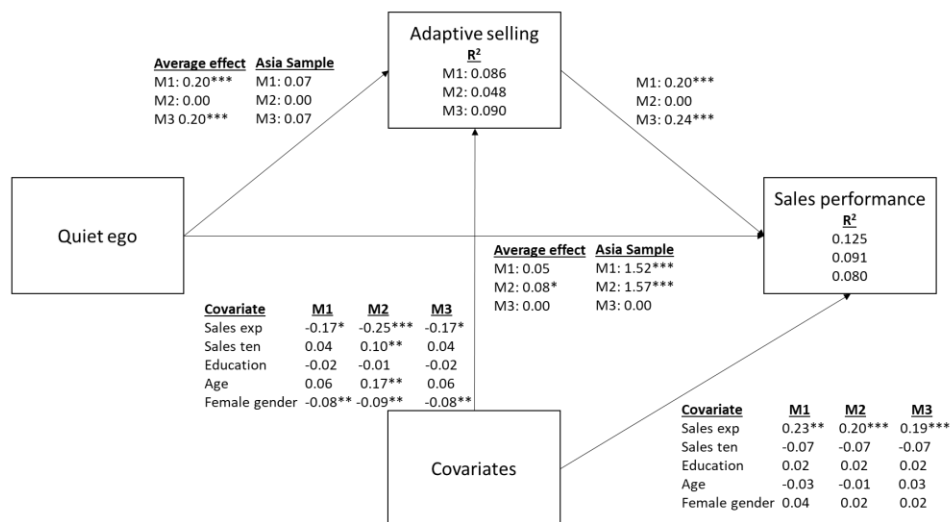
The hypothesis that culture would moderate these effects, H5, demonstrated mixed support. For the Asian sample, the direct effect of quiet ego on sales performance was significant and large ($\gamma_{\text{tot}} = 1.52$, $p < 0.001$; Cohen, 1988) when compared to the European sample ($\gamma = 0.05$, $p = 0.201$). This supports H5a, that culture moderates the quiet ego-sales performance link such that collectivistic cultures exhibit quieter egos

which increases sales performance. Interestingly, H5b was not supported. The effect of quiet ego on adaptive selling was small and dropped out of significance ($\gamma_{tot} = 0.07$, $p = 0.393$; Cohen, 1988) compared to the average of the sample ($\gamma = 0.20$, $p < 0.001$). This result indicates that the Asian sample no longer demonstrated mediation through adaptive selling.

Most covariate effects were not significant. Female identified participants tended toward slightly lower ratings of adaptive selling ($\gamma = -0.08$, $p = 0.004$). More experienced salespeople tended to have less adaptive selling behavior ($\gamma = -0.17$, $p = 0.022$), however they also tended to have better sales performance ($\gamma = 0.23$, $p < 0.001$). When moderation was constrained to be a null effect, however, sales tenure and age were positively associated with adaptive selling (tenure: $\gamma = 0.10$, $p = 0.003$; age: $\gamma = 0.17$, $p = 0.002$). This indicates that there may be a dynamic relationship between learning adaptive selling behaviors and experience.

Figure 2

Direct and Indirect Effects



* = $p < .001$; ** = $p < .01$; *** = $p < .05$

5.3 Post-hoc analyses

A post hoc decision was made to consider possible effects of gender as a moderator of quiet ego, in addition to culture. Gender differences have yet to be empirically investigated within this expanded model of adaptive selling. However, a contemporary neuroscience study confirmed that women are on average more empathic than men due to non-genetic biological factors such as socialization; these higher levels of empathy may signal that women have a more balanced, and therefore quieter, ego (Warrier et al., 2018). A small but growing body of contemporary sales literature also points to relational selling as a potential competitive advantage for B2B female sales professionals in a context of increasingly complex service and solution offerings. Sojka & Tansuhaj (1997) found that women reported more self-disclosure, cooperative intentions, and more trust in their customers than their male counterparts.

Adding these moderating effects had minimal change to model fit (X^2 (2, N = 330) = 2.30, $p = 0.317$; $X^2/DF = 1.15$; CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = 0.021, 90% CI [0.000, 0.084]; SRMR = 0.020). The moderation parameters were not significant ($p > 0.200$). Notwithstanding, the effect sizes were moderate to large (QE->AS, $\gamma = 0.51$; QE->PERF, $\gamma = 0.25$; Cohen, 1988). While this sample didn't indicate strong moderating effects of gender, these indicators suggest that there may be reason to suspect that gender is a relevant aspect of this path model.

Next, direct comparisons between male and female identified participants were considered between the demographic and psychological variables included in the analysis (Table 6). Across all variables, effect sizes were small (Cohen's d at most 0.20; Cohen, 1988), however there were some significant differences identified. On average, women tended

toward slightly lower ratings of quiet ego ($t(328) = -2.13, p = 0.034$, Cohen's $d = 0.12$; Cohen, 1988) and adaptive selling ($t(328) = -3.70, p < 0.001$, Cohen's $d = 0.20$; Cohen, 1988). Additionally, female identified respondents tended to be slightly younger ($t(328) = -2.89, p = 0.004$, Cohen's $d = 0.16$; Cohen, 1988) and slightly less educated educational attainment ($t(328) = -3.67, p < 0.001$, odds ratio = 0.67). While this indicates that female respondents were meaningfully different demographically, differences were not significant for all sales variables (i.e., performance, experience, and tenure, $p > 0.15$).

Table 4

Model Fit

Model	χ^2	DF	P	χ^2/DF	CFI	RMSEA	90% CI LL	90% CI UL	SRMR
Full model	2.12	2	0.346	1.06	1.00	0.014	0.000	0.070	0.022
Direct only	43.09	6	<0.001	7.18	0.91	0.137	0.095	0.119	0.041
Mediation only	19.66	4	0.001	4.92	0.97	0.095	0.056	0.136	0.026

Table 5

Path Estimates

Path	PE	Full		PE	Direct		PE	Mediation		
		Z	p		Z	p		Z	p	
Mediational paths										
		12.0	<0.00					12.0	<0.00	
QE->AS	0.20	4	1	0.00	-	-	0.20	4	1	
QE->PERF	0.05	1.28	0.201	0.09	2.39	0.017	0.00	-	-	
AS->PERF	0.20	6.69	1	0.00	-	-	0.24	8.12	1	<0.00
Moderation										
Sample->AS	0.21	2.51	0.012	0.00	-	-	0.21	2.51	0.012	
Sample->PERF	-1.42	-9.36	1	-1.40	9.46	1	0.00	-	-	<0.00
QE->AS	-0.13	-2.11	0.035	0.00	-	-	-0.13	-2.11	0.035	
QE->PERF	1.48	9.62	1	1.48	9.48	1	0.00	-	-	<0.00
Covariate effects on AS										
										<0.00
Sales experience	-0.17	-2.29	0.022	-0.25	5.56	1	-0.17	-2.29	0.022	
Sales tenure	0.04	0.96	0.338	0.10	2.94	0.003	0.04	0.96	0.338	
Educational attainment	-0.02	-0.51	0.611	-0.01	0.21	0.838	-0.02	-0.51	0.611	
Age	0.06	0.82	0.410	0.17	3.10	0.002	0.06	0.82	0.41	
Female gender identity	-0.08	-2.92	0.004	-0.09	3.13	0.002	-0.08	-2.92	0.004	
Covariate effects on PERF										
		14.8	<0.00							<0.00
Sales experience	0.23	2	1	0.20	6.64	1	0.19	5.91	1	
Sales tenure	-0.07	-0.89	0.374	-0.07	0.85	0.398	-0.07	-0.87	0.386	
Educational attainment	0.02	0.69	0.491	0.02	0.59	0.558	0.02	0.80	0.427	
Age	-0.03	-0.84	0.399	-0.01	0.48	0.632	0.03	0.56	0.578	
Female gender identity	0.04	0.43	0.671	0.02	0.22	0.828	0.02	0.26	0.798	
R2 Effect Sizes										
AS		0.086			0.048			0.09		
PERF		0.125			0.091			0.08		

Table 6

Gender differences

Variable	Female participants			Male participants			Differences			Cohen's d
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD	Difference	t (328)	p	
PERF	148	4.80	1.18	182	4.84	1.04	-0.04	-0.66	0.512	0.04
AS	148	5.21	1.26	182	5.45	1.11	-0.24	-3.70	<0.001	0.20
QE	148	5.01	0.62	182	5.09	0.73	-0.08	-2.13	0.034	0.12
Sales experience	148	7.77	8.12	182	8.34	7.80	-0.57	-1.30	0.193	0.07
Sales tenure	148	7.21	8.19	182	7.15	7.48	0.06	0.14	0.889	0.01
Education*	148	0.50	0.50	182	0.60	0.49	-0.10	-3.67	<0.001	0.67
Age	148	37.76	12.35	182	39.85	13.75	-2.09	-2.89	0.004	0.16

*Because educational attainment was binomial, the reported means represent the percentage of respondents with more than a Bachelor's degree and the effect size estimate is the odds ratio

6. Discussion

The aim of this article is to explore the saliency of quiet ego in a B2B selling context. Specifically, the study examines the influence of quiet ego on adaptive selling behaviors and sales performance outcomes across salespeople in Europe and Asia. Moreover, the moderating impact of culture on quiet ego and the relationship between quiet ego and adaptive selling behaviors is investigated. Most of the hypotheses were supported. The two notable exceptions were H1 and H5b, which raise important questions. These findings have several implications for scholars and practitioners.

Table 7

Support for Hypotheses

#	Hypothesis	Support
H1	Salespeople with quieter egos demonstrate higher levels of sales performance.	N
H2	Salespeople with quieter egos demonstrate higher levels of adaptive selling behavior.	Y
H3	Salespeople who engage in more adaptive selling behavior demonstrate higher levels of sales performance.	Y
H4	Adaptive selling behavior mediates the positive effect of a quiet ego on sales performance.	Y
H5a	Culture moderates the relationship between quiet ego and sales performance such that salespeople in collectivist cultures have quieter egos which increases performance when compared to salespeople in individualistic cultures.	Y
H5b	Culture moderates the mediated relationship such that salespeople in collectivist cultures with quieter egos engage in more adaptive selling behaviors which subsequently increases performance.	N

6.1 Theoretical implications

This research makes five contributions. The first contribution is extending BBT (Fredrickson, 1998) through the novel application of quiet ego in a contemporary B2B selling context. The second contribution is related to the utility of quiet ego characteristics for individual sales performance. The third contribution highlights the mediating role of adaptive selling behaviors in the relationship between quiet ego and sales performance. The fourth contribution identifies the moderating role of culture on quiet ego characteristics in Europe and Asia. The fifth contribution relates to how managers can reframe their approach to salesperson adaptability through an understanding of quiet ego and its shadow dynamics.

6.1.1. Reframing the role of positive affect in conceptions of the salesperson psyche

The domain of positive psychology was initially focused on well-being and happiness but has expanded across almost all subdomains of psychology and across multiple fields including management, marketing, and sales (Kim et al., 2018). This strength-based approach, what an individual does well, has increased scholarly interest in a wider range of individual salesperson traits and momentary emotional states.

BBT (Fredrickson, 1998) was identified as a useful framework that is applicable across a wide range of selling contexts (Erevelles & Fukawa, 2013). However, despite its acknowledged utility, contemporary sales research has made limited use of this theoretical lens. For example, Verbeke et al. (2004) applied BBT to pride and found that this positive

self-conscious emotion increased cognitive flexibility and broadened the range of behaviors that salespeople engaged in with both colleagues and customers. However, questions arose as to mechanisms for managers to instill pride and the potential for hubris (maladaptive pride). Lussier and Hartmann (2017) also drew from broaden-and-build theory to find that optimism and resilience increased salesperson performance through the promotion of customer-oriented behaviors. In contrast to Verbeke (2004), psychological resources such as hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism are malleable to short training interventions (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017).

This study's findings align with Lussier and Hartmann (2017) in identifying additional psychological resources that can be targeted through brief intervention (Wayment, Collier, et al., 2015) and extends BBT to a new understanding of the salesperson psyche. Salespeople can leverage quiet ego characteristics to expand their frame of reference, open themselves to new experiences, and develop the skills and abilities to adapt to their customers' needs.

6.1.2. Importance of quiet ego characteristics in a selling context

This study was the first to port the construct of quiet ego to the sales research domain. The findings demonstrate the validity of this construct for sales professionals and its influence on adaptive selling behaviors and sales performance. Although the focal hypothesis that quieter egos would be associated with higher sales performance, H1, was not supported in the combined sample, differential effects were found across cultures which lends partial support to the predicted relationship. The findings indicate a positive and strong direct relationship between the quiet ego and sales performance for the Asia

(collectivistic) sample but not the Europe (individualistic) sample. Given that the Europe sample comprised 60.6% of the participants, it is not surprising that the combined sample masked the direct relationship in a collectivistic context. The lack of a significant relationship between quiet ego and sales performance in the European sample warrants future research. One explanation is that the noisier egos reported by those participants impedes their ability to perform without an intervening variable such as adaptive selling behaviors.

6.1.3. Quiet ego and adaptive selling behavior as cues for sales performance

Higher levels of quiet ego did, in fact, predict increased use of adaptive selling behaviors, H2, and operated through adaptive selling to promote sales performance, H3 and H4. This indirect effect has analogous support in the positive psychology literature where quiet ego has been found to impact academic performance through adaptive coping (Wayment, Collier, et al., 2015).

Interestingly, this indirect effect did not hold across cultures, H5b. Adaptive selling behaviors fully mediated the relationship between quiet ego and sales performance in the European sample. Quieter egos promote the use of adaptive selling behaviors which then leads to enhanced sales performance in individualistic cultures. This finding has intuitive appeal given the extensive focus on individual needs and results at the expense of mutually beneficial outcomes. The more compassionate a stance European salespeople take toward themselves and others, the more likely they are to engage in flexible thinking and cooperative behaviors that benefit customers and the bottom-line.

In contrast, quiet ego operated directly on sales performance in the Asian sample. This finding is curious given that it suggests that actual use of adaptive selling behaviors

in collectivistic cultures is not a necessary mechanism for increasing sales. There are competing explanations for why this pathway may substantively differ from that in the European sample. The first account is that adaptive selling might not be a salient construct for Asian salespeople due to a general lack of meaning in collectivist cultures and/or issues in translating, adapting, and validating the survey instrument. A second explanation is that adaptive selling behaviors might be interpreted as disingenuous behaviors that don't support long-term customer relationships (Chakrabarty et al., 2013).

6.1.4. Culture matters in characteristic adaptations that directly affect sales performance

Prior research on quiet ego characteristics across cultures provides conflicting evidence. Wirtz & Chiu (2008) noted that some studies demonstrated that quiet ego operates similarly in different cultures whereas other studies indicated that quiet ego manifests in unique ways dependent upon the cultural context. This study helps to clarify the properties of the quiet ego while also helping to refine current concepts of cultural differences.

In collectivistic cultures, a quiet ego may be assumed, because of the importance of social harmony. As such, the direct association with sales performance is much stronger, and the association with adaptive selling is not relevant because it is assumed that a person embraces a quieter ego. Conversely, in individualistic cultures, a quiet ego could either promote or detract from sales performance dependent upon whether that audience views the salesperson as timid or humble. Adaptive selling behaviors do not appear to convey the same mixed messages. Quiet ego seems more relevant to adaptive selling in an individualistic context because it indicates a person, regardless of true motivations, who is more engaged with and cooperative toward the customers.

For collectivistic cultures, a quiet ego may be the norm; for individualistic cultures, quiet ego may be an exception.

6.2 Managerial implications

Quiet ego has numerous real-world applications. First, there is consistent empirical support for the benefits of using adaptive selling behaviors with customers. However, the ability to successfully measure and target adaptability remains elusive in practice due to a lack of clarity with respect to how and to what salespeople adapt their behaviors (Alavi et al., 2019). This study suggests that quiet ego characteristics, as a broad concept, encompass a wider range of antecedents that promote positive adaptation in customer interactions and either indirectly or directly increase sales performance dependent upon cultural context. These new pathways may be more tangible to sales managers and malleable to brief and cost-effective interventions (see Wayment, Collier, et al., 2015).

Second, the QES is a free and easy-to-administer survey tool that can facilitate an understanding of where prospective and existing salespeople map out with respect to their egos at a given point in time and longitudinally in conjunction with sales data. Many of the common traits sought in salespeople (e.g., aggressiveness, ego drive, competitiveness) may become less relevant in B2B where product complexity, long-term orientations, and customer demandingness require previously unseen levels of collaboration and co-creation. A quiet ego supports a balanced orientation between the self and others which may act as an important buffer to ensure that the dark side traits of the ego don't overshadow the needs and expectations of prospective and existing customers. Assessing the quiet ego

during the recruitment and selection process may provide an important criterion for building an effective and cooperative sales team.

Lastly, it is important to note that positive traits aren't always adaptive and negative traits aren't always maladaptive. Smith et al. (2018) noted that louder egos free the mind, particularly in creative pursuits (e.g., art, music, acting), such that individuals can express their true abilities. Quieter egos, especially if silent, can overemphasize the needs of others at the expense of the individual such that they don't have a voice. Similarly, in sales, emotional response tendencies need to be situationally balanced (Kosloff et al., 2008). For example, Jelinek and Ahearne (2010) found that trait competitiveness is a double-edged sword in that it promotes conflict and subversive behavior toward colleagues which negatively impacts performance. Sales managers would benefit from leveraging quiet ego training to ensure socially adaptive expressions of the salesperson ego when interacting with customers.

6.3 Limitations and future research

Although the research model is grounded in a sound theoretical framework, the results of this study are subject to a set of limitations. First, the cross-sectional nature of this research design prohibits causal inference. A longitudinal or experimental design could have supported the identified relationships with sounder methodological rigor. Second, the sampling frame required different approaches to the recruitment of participants which may have undermined comprehensiveness and accuracy. These sales professionals worked in various positions across different companies which means there may have been other organizational and cultural influences not controlled for in the analyses. Third,

in restricting the investigation to the quiet ego, other potentially important psychological resources went unexamined. Quiet ego represents a wide range of psychological constructs related to the ego, however, as noted throughout the study, these characteristic adaptations clearly interact with other capacities to ultimately determine the adaptive or maladaptive nature of outcomes. Fourth, self-report measures were employed to assess quiet ego, adaptive selling behaviors, and sales performance. The use of these instruments, even if validated, raises concerns that the responses may be biased or subject to variable error which could confound the results.

These limitations present significant opportunities for future research. First, salespeople are highly susceptible to ego depletion resulting from job-related stressors (e.g., customer demandingness, boundary spanning task overload, and lost sales). Conducting a longitudinal or experimental design that incorporates the interaction of quiet ego with well-documented stressors would help improve extant understanding of the ways in which a salesperson's ego is depleted, maintained, and/or built over time.

Second, psychological capital is a related characteristic adaptation comprised of hope, efficacy, resilience, and optimism. This construct has seen sporadic application in the sales literature and is an important capacity to consider in conjunction with quiet ego.

Third, adaptability is an intuitive concept; however, its familiarity belies the cultural dependencies that may exist. The specific issue of misinterpreting a questionnaire score is further compounded in the case of cross-cultural research (van de Vijver et al., 2008). A detailed examination of questionnaire measurement, and its behavioral correlates, is essential to understanding the cross-cultural validity of research using any version of the ADAPTS scale (Spiro & Weitz, 1990).

Fourth, buyer-seller dyadic perceptions of emotional tendencies would provide greater insight throughout the course of customer interactions. Buyers awareness of, and responses to, the behavioral consequences of quiet ego are an important source of validation to the impact of different psychological resources on sales performance outcomes.

Lastly, the shadow dynamics of psychological capacities presents an unexplored area of research in the sales domain within and across individuals and cultures. Specifically, more research into the curvilinear effects of positive traits and emotional states, as well as their boundary conditions, is needed.

7. Conclusions

Lomas et al. (2020) argued that positive psychology is now in its third wave of scholarship which has seen a marked increase in its scope. Contemporary research in this field has moved beyond the individual person to explore the impact of context, systems, culture, and ethics in which people and their well-being are embedded. This study represents an important first step in exploring the positive psychological construct of quiet ego in a new context, sales, system (interactions between buyer and seller), culture (individualistic/collectivistic), and ethics (shadow dynamics of salesperson ego). Initial support was found for construct validity and practical utility in the application of quiet ego to a selling context. The quiet ego promotes a healthier sense of self and an orientation toward cooperation rather than competition with others. This recognition of the need for balance between a salesperson ego that needs to be taken down a peg or two and one that needs to be strong enough to withstand the inevitable barrage of customer rejection is not new

(Mayer & Greenberg, 2006). However, the quiet ego may provide the first operationalized pathway to true understanding and intervening across selling contexts and cultures.

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**QUIET EGO VS. PSYCHOLOGICAL CAPITAL: UNPACKING THE ROLE
OF RESOURCE CARAVANS IN SALESPERSON PERFORMANCE AND
WELL-BEING**

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Abstract

Business-to-business (B2B) buyers are demanding more complex, customized solutions and more personalized after sales support and service. A well-documented rise in post-sales dissatisfaction suggests an erosion in relationship quality between the buyer and salesperson over time. Stress and burnout, while predictive of salesperson turnover, may not be diagnostic of buyer confidence in, and satisfaction with, the quality of the helping relationship. Contemporary research in positive psychology has converged on two higher-order constructs that may buffer the depleting effects of boundary spanning activities: psychological capital (PsyCap) and quiet ego (QE). A correlational study (n=330) of B2B sales professionals was conducted in Europe and Asia to investigate the potential mediating role of PsyCap and QE in the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload (BSTO) and both sales performance (SP) and psychological well-being (PWB). PsyCap positively mediated the BSTO to SP and PWB pathways. The pathway from QE to PWB was positive but, counterintuitively, the link to SP was negative. Curvilinear effects for QE were identified such that silent and noisy egos were positively associated with SP, whereas quiet egos positively predicted PWB. Culture also positively moderated the relationship between BSTO and both PsyCap and QE. Implications of the findings for theoreticians and practitioners are discussed.

Keywords: business-to-business (B2B) sales, customer demandingness, psychological capital (H.E.R.O.), quiet ego, boundary-spanning task overload, salesperson well-being

1. Introduction

“The changing nature of technology and globalization imply that relational selling will continue to evolve, and salespeople will need to learn to deal with larger, more organized buyers who demand more from them.” (Arli et al., 2018, p. 182)

The role of business-to-business (B2B) sales professionals is adapting to meet ever-changing customer expectations. B2B buyers are now demanding more complex, customized solutions and more personalized after sales support and service (Cuevas, 2018; Viio & Grönroos, 2014). This profound change in the nature of professional selling has spurred a global race to scale up digital platforms that seamlessly support buyer needs and expectations throughout the purchase journey (Agnihotri, 2021; Blocker et al., 2012). However, this emphasis on the marriage of technology and human interaction *prior to* the sale has created a dearth of attention to, and related scholarship on, the role of salesperson support *after* the sale [emphasis added]. There is evidence to suggest the high-touch, relationship-driven side of the business takes a backseat once prospects become customers: “74% of buyers work with the first salesperson to add value and insight, but only 20% are seen as helpful post-sale” (Brockmeyer, 2019). This relational disconnect raises important questions regarding the factors underlying the high rate of buyer dissatisfaction with salesperson service behaviors after the sale.

A growing body of literature has explored the resultant challenges and consequences of the increased service role for salespeople (Lassk et al., 2012) including sales-service ambidexterity (Agnihotri et al., 2017; Rapp et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2012), salesperson overload (Delpechitre et al., 2018; Jones et al., 2007), salesperson job stress (Moncrief et al., 1997;

Sager, 1994; Sager & Wilson, 1995), and salesperson burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Lewin & Sager, 2007; Low et al., 2001; Matthews et al., 2018; Rangarajan et al., 2020; Sand & Miyazaki, 2000; Shepherd et al., 2011). However, these constructs do not appear to be diagnostic of buyer dissatisfaction with the non-selling activities and relationship components after the sale.

Interestingly, the only studies-to-date that focused on potential coping mechanisms to reduce salesperson stress, emotional exhaustion, and/or burnout showed mixed results. Matthews et al. (2016) found that job resources (customer orientation, sales training, and supervisor support) increased job performance as result of increased salesperson job engagement rather than reduced emotional exhaustion. In contrast, Matthews et al. (2018) found that salesperson customer relationship management (CRM) autonomy increased salesperson burnout under certain conditions. Similarly, Rangarajan et al. (2020) showed that salesperson grit could have a neutral or negative effect on a salesperson's ability to manage customer relationships effectively.

The ineffectiveness of coping mechanisms, in conjunction with firms continuing to increase salespeople's service expectations alongside selling responsibilities (Rapp, 2017), suggests the need to view this problem through a different theoretical lens. Positive psychological constructs remain largely understudied in the sales research domain but may provide an alternate pathway to mitigate, if not prevent, the deleterious effects of boundary spanning activities and other related pressures unique to B2B sales. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand how psychological capital and the phenomenon of the "quiet ego" relate to salesperson performance and well-being. To the best of this author's knowledge, no research to-date has examined either the mediating role of positive resource caravans or the phenomenon of the quiet ego in the sales literature.

A correlational study is conducted in Europe and Asia to answer the following research questions: (1) “Are positive psychological resources related to salesperson performance and well-being in a B2B context?”; (2) “Do psychological capital and quiet ego mediate the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and performance outcomes in a B2B context?”; (3) “Do psychological capital and quiet ego mediate the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and salesperson well-being outcomes in a B2B context?”; and (4) “Does national culture act as a boundary condition to boundary-spanning task overload in a B2B context?”

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. In the next section, the theoretical framework and hypotheses are developed based on integrating conservation of resources theory with a strength model. Psychological capital and quiet ego, operating as resource caravans, are hypothesized to mediate the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and both salesperson performance and well-being. Additionally, national culture is examined for potential moderation of the impact of boundary-spanning task overload on psychological resource caravans. Following the hypotheses section, details of the sample, measures, and analysis are provided. Using structural equations modeling, the hypotheses are tested with a unique sample of 330 B2B salespeople in Europe and Asia. Next, the results and their implications for theory and practice are discussed.

2. Background

2.1 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework draws from conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001, 2002) and the strength or resource-depletion model (Baumeister et al., 1998; Muraven et al., 1998). Based on these theories and the extant research on psychological resources (psychological capital and quiet ego), this study hypothesizes direct and indirect relationships between the boundary-spanning task overload experienced by salespeople and their performance and psychological well-being.

2.1.1 Conservation of resources theory

COR postulates that individuals are highly motivated to safeguard their existing resources and to reclaim lost resources or secure new resources in response to psychological stress. Resources are defined as “those objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies that are valued by the individual or that serve as a means for attainment of these objects, personal characteristics, conditions, or energies” (Hobfoll, 1989, p. 516).

For example, in a selling context, positive psychological resources such as self-efficacy, resilience, and perspective-taking are malleable traits that may facilitate a salesperson’s resistance to stress. Self-efficacy boosts a salesperson’s sense of control in difficult circumstances, resilience helps a salesperson change course in the and continue moving toward their goals when faced with adversity, and perspective-taking encourages a salesperson to see problems from the customer’s point of view and find mutually beneficial

solutions. The perceived value, and suitability, of these resources differs across individuals and contexts (Halbesleben et al., 2014).

COR predicts that perceived or actual loss of resources is the most psychologically threatening; so much so that individuals often resort to employing other resources as loss-control strategies which can compound depletion. A strength of the theory is that it accounts for both the impact of stress and the motivation to protect and recover after the experience of stress. This dual perspective is germane to studying how a salesperson's personal resources are invested following the loss of a sale or failed service interactions with customers and how those setbacks affect well-being and performance.

COR has been successfully applied across a wide variety of disciplines and contexts, including as an explanatory tool for the following salesperson constructs: personal stress (Peasley et al., 2020), emotional exhaustion (Darrat et al., 2016; Matthews et al., 2016; Shu et al., 2019), emotional labor (Brotheridge & Lee, 2002), failure attributions (Mallin & Mayo, 2006), perceived service cannibalization (Díaz et al., 2017), and work-family conflict (Bande et al., 2019).

2.1.2 The resource-depletion model

The resource-depletion model theorizes that purposeful and conscious effort to control behavior in response to stress is important to individual performance and well-being (Baumeister et al., 1998; Muraven et al., 1998). A key assumption is that the cognitive strength (e.g., willpower) to commit to a deliberate course of action depletes a finite pool of resources which creates a ripple effect across subsequent actions. These resources are ill-defined in the model; however, their impact is generalized in that depleted capacity in

one area has a corresponding effect in other areas (Muraven et al., 1998). A parallel can be found in the critical role played by emotions in both internal and external salesperson interactions. The outcomes of buyer-seller relationships are often determined by how salespeople emotionally process and respond to the expectations and demands of their organization, prospects, and existing customers.

The resource-depletion model predicts that, similar to a muscle getting tired from exertion, effortful and repeated self-regulation fatigues the ego which may motivate some individuals to limit their use of self-control resources until those same resources are built up again (Baumeister et al., 2007; Muraven et al., 2006). This conservation of resources can further compound the lagged and maladaptive effect of an otherwise short-term impairment to individual strengths (Muraven et al., 2006). Multiple studies validate that decisions requiring an expenditure of internal resources to exert self-control negatively and cumulatively impact subsequent decisions and erode performance (Muraven et al., 1998); even when those subsequent decisions are wholly unrelated (Baumeister et al., 1998).

Interestingly, given sufficient motivation, individuals can be induced to overcome depleted resources up to a point (Muraven & Slessareva, 2003). For example, the use of cash and non-cash performance incentive funds (SPIFFs) are commonly used in sales to increase effort and boost short-term results. SPIFFs, and other types of motives for good performance, may counteract depleted resources; but at some point, the fatigue is insurmountable. Regular exertion of self-control can also improve cognitive endurance over time (Baumeister et al., 2007; see also Baumeister et al., 2006).

The resource-depletion model has been successfully applied across a wide variety of disciplines and contexts, including as an explanatory tool for the following constructs operationalized in studies involving salespeople: emotional exhaustion (Lussier et al., 2019),

interracial interactions (Richeson & Shelton, 2003), self-regulating shame (Bagozzi et al., 2003), and social influence (Burkley et al., 2011).

2.1.3 Integrating theoretical components

These theories converge in a selling context to identify the origins of stress and describe the process by which the mismatch between the task demands and the salesperson's self-control resources depletes their capacity to respond effectively over time. Resource availability or, as this paper argues, positive psychological resources are essential to mitigating the ebb and flow of an increased emphasis on sales and service behaviors to remain competitive. There is conceptual overlap between the personal resources (e.g., psychological traits) in COR and the generalized strength of individuals in the resource-depletion model (Hagger, 2015).

In summary, it is the contention of this author that those salespeople with greater psychological resources are better equipped to prevent the loss of existing resources and more effective at gaining new resources. These individual differences in the ability to draw upon a limited pool of mental resources will determine success in regulating behavioral responses to customer demands and subsequent psychological well-being and performance.

2.2 Positive psychological traits as resource caravans

Psychological resources tend to co-occur and function together in “caravans” that either reinforce and foster or impede and erode productive behaviors in work settings

(Hobfoll, 1989, 2011). These caravans interact synergistically to produce differentiated manifestations over time and across contexts. Strengthening a major resource that is linked with having others can create a potential spiral of gains for an individual over time whereas an absence of that same resource can create a potential spiral of losses during that same period (Chen et al., 2015). The carryover effects of resource surpluses or shortages have important implications for salespeople who are engaged in frequent interactions with prospective and existing customers.

Herein lies the opportunity. Positive emotions remain largely understudied in the extant sales literature and, when conceptualized, are often studied in isolation. This approach is problematic given that constellations of positive emotions are critical to maintaining and developing pools of resources that may help buffer against psychological stress and strain (Hobfoll, 2001; see also Turner et al., 1999). Two higher-order multidimensional constructs that have been shown to act as positive resource caravans are psychological capital (Luthans et al., 2017) and quiet ego (Wayment & Bauer, 2008).

2.2.1 Psychological capital

Psychological capital is a higher-order multidimensional construct comprised of four standalone variables: hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). These facets, also referred to as the “HERO within” (p. 339), may interact with one another to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate parts.

Hope refers to a goal-directed thought process in which people believe they can formulate multiple pathways to reach desired goals and have the agency to use those articulated pathways (Snyder et al., 1996). Higher levels of hope are associated with greater motivation to move toward goals and more ways to reach those goals (Snyder et al., 2002). “When confronted with a stressor, higher as compared with lower hope people produce more strategies for dealing with the stressor (pathways) and express a greater likelihood of using those strategies; moreover, higher hope persons are more likely to find benefits in their ongoing dealings with stressors” (Snyder, 2002, p. 265)

Self-efficacy refers to an individual’s belief in their capability to successfully perform using their skills under certain circumstances (Bandura, 1997). Stronger self-efficacy beliefs are associated with greater cognitive processing and increased performance in a variety of settings. “People’s self-efficacy beliefs determine their level of motivation, as reflected in how much effort they will exert in an endeavor and how long they will persevere in the face of obstacles [e.g., stress]” (Bandura, 1989, p. 1176).

Resilience refers to an individual’s ability to positively adapt to and recover from significant risk or adversity (Masten, 2001; Masten & Reed, 2002). Higher levels of resilience are associated with lower perceived stress and greater well-being. “Applied to the workplace, resilience is defined as the “positive psychological capacity to rebound, to ‘bounce back’ from adversity, uncertainty, conflict, failure, or even positive change, progress and increased responsibility” (Luthans, 2002a, p. 702).

Optimism refers to a mental attitude characterized by the extent to which a person has a positive outlook toward their future and believes they are at least partly responsible for those favorable expectancies (Carver et al., 2010; Scheier et al., 2001). Higher levels of optimism are associated with proactively creating more positive events in life and better

subjective well-being in times of adversity or difficulty. “Optimism predicted more problem-focused coping with controllable stressors (e.g., academic demands) and more emotion-focused coping with uncontrollable stressors (e.g., trauma). Thus, optimism predicted active attempts to both change and accommodate to stressful circumstances, in ways that reflect flexible engagement” (Carver et al., 2010, p. 882)

A positive psychological state of development within this construct is described as an individual who exhibits the self-efficacy to pursue desired goals, indicates optimism about their ability to achieve those desired goals now and in the future, expresses hope in their formulation and pursuit of alternate pathways to actualized those desired goals, and demonstrates resilience in times of stress and unexpected challenges in reaching those desired goals (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017). “Together, these HERO resources will help maintain an internalized sense of control and intentionality while goals are being pursued and accomplished” (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017, pp. 7-8).

2.2.2 Quiet ego

Wayment and Bauer (2008) coined the term “quiet ego” as an overarching description for a broad array of positive psychological constructs that facilitate a balance of concerns for the self and others as well as promote the growth of the self and others. These constructs converge on four principal characteristics of a healthy ego: detached awareness (objective self-awareness), inclusive identification (cooperation), perspective-taking (compassion), and growth-mindedness (wisdom) (Wayment & Bauer, 2017).

Detached awareness refers to being aware and mindful what is happening in the present moment without judgment or preconceived ideas about how the moment should unfold (Brown & Ryan, 2003). This detachment from the ego attenuates critical appraisals of one's self and allows a person to be more impartial and receptive toward what they might learn about themselves or others (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Wayment & Bauer, 2008).

Inclusive identification refers to recalibrating one's interactions with others to ensure a cooperative and collaborative relationship whereby neither person sacrifices themselves nor compromises their values (Leary et al., 2008). This integrated interpretation of the self and others requires an awareness and understanding of other people's perspectives; not simply tolerating but moving beyond differences to acceptance and inclusion.

Perspective-taking refers to the ability to take another person's perspective and reflect on their thoughts and feelings (Davis, 1983). Seeing the world through an imagined other is closely related with interdependence in that it motivates an authentic desire to help. The pursuit of compassionate goals is often described as a "defining characteristic of an interdependent self that prioritizes harmonious relationships over individual achievement" (Niiya & Crocker, 2009, p. 1).

Growth-mindedness refers to a genuine desire to cultivate change for the self and others over time (Ryff, 1989). This future orientation raises questions about the long-term impact of actions and reframes challenges in the present to be an acceptable part of life that doesn't diminish self-esteem. Being concerned with growth allows an individual to develop in an adaptive manner that is not characterized by material or social progress (Wayment et al., 2015).

All four facets of quiet ego interact synergistically to promote balance and growth over time. A salesperson who can be truly present in the moment (detached awareness)

will be more actively engaged with, and sensitive to the problems of, a prospective or existing customer. This relational orientation facilitates cooperation (inclusive identification) and the co-creation of unique value for that prospective or existing customer. Contemplating different viewpoints (perspective-taking) conveys genuine concern for, and motivation to help, that prospective or existing customer. Lastly, taking actions that foster values oriented with future rewards (growth-mindedness) preserves a more strategic view, and builds trust, with that prospective or existing customer.

2.3 Psychological resources and well-being

Well-being is a topic of increasing importance in the marketing literature despite the lack of a formal construct. Its meaning is typically derived from the management literature which has a longstanding tradition of interest in, and concern for, health and well-being in the workplace. Employee well-being is broadly defined as “the various life/non-work satisfactions enjoyed by individuals, work/job related satisfactions, and general health [combination of psychological and physiological outcomes]” (Danna & Griffin, 1999, p. 359).

Positive psychology distinguishes between hedonic or subjective well-being (SWB; Kahneman et al. 1999) and eudaimonic well-being (EWB; Ryan & Deci, 2001; Ryff & Singer, 2008). The SWB approach is focused on an individual’s cognitive evaluation of emotional well-being which consists of happiness, life satisfaction, and accompanying level of positive affect (Diener, 1984). Job satisfaction predominates indicators of SWB in the extant sales literature (e.g., Brown & Peterson, 1993; Churchill et al., 1974; Dugan et

al., 2019) with a few notable exceptions capturing traditional measures of emotional well-being (e.g., Katak et al., 1992; Piccolo et al., 2005).

In contrast, the EWB approach is concerned with an individual's psychological and social well-being which encompass meaning in life, self-actualization, and personal growth (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Ryff & Singer, 2008). These indicators of human potential are typically measured as work engagement, emotional exhaustion, and burnout in sales research (e.g., Lewin & Sager, 2009; Low et al., 2001; Medhurst & Albrecht, 2011).

This delineation of EWB and SWB has recently given way to the concept of flourishing which combines the two perspectives (Diener et al., 2010; Huppert & So, 2013). Multiple studies have shown that higher levels of flourishing are associated with higher levels of both EWB and SWB (Huppert, 2009; Huta & Ryan, 2010). This newer construct has yet to be applied to the sales research domain where little is known about the psychosocial consequences of resource caravans for salespeople.

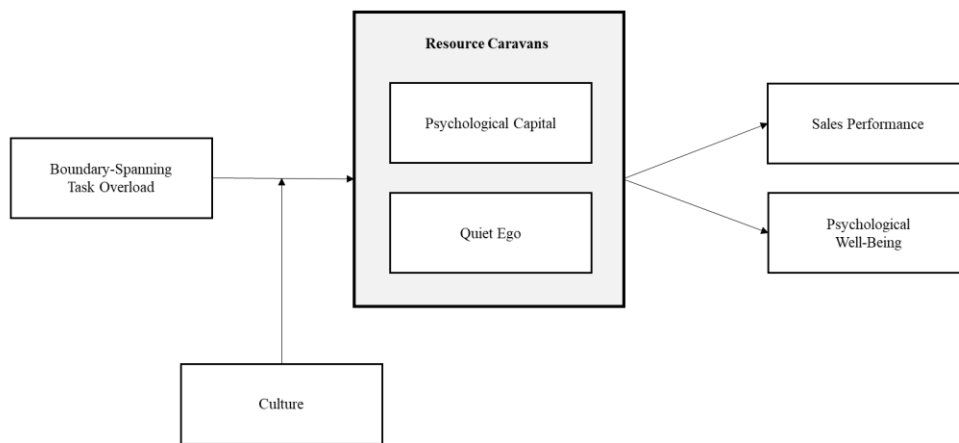
3. Conceptual framework and hypotheses

The aim is to compare the intervening variable effects of psychological capital (PsyCap) and quiet ego (QE) resource caravans in the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload (BSTO) and both sales performance (SP) and salesperson psychological well-being (PWB) (see Figure 1). This study responds to recent calls for the applicability of positive psychological constructs to the sales research domain (Friend et al., 2016) by pitting an understudied construct, PsyCap, against a new construct, QE, in a B2B selling context. The study also complements and extends prior research on salesperson characteristics by focusing on (1) experiences with BSTO as a stressor unique to

sales; (2) the link between QE and SP; (3) the mediating role of resource caravans in the relationship between BSTO and both SP and PWB; (4) PWB manifested through psychosocial flourishing; and (5) the moderating effect of culture on the relationship between BSTO and resource caravans.

Figure 1

Conceptual model



Note. Age, gender, sales experience, market turbulence, and percentage commission served as the control variables.

3.1 BSTO and psychological resources

Boundary spanners are often susceptible to higher levels of work-related stress compared to non-boundary spanning roles (Moncrief et al., 1997; Singh & Rhoads, 1991). Singh (1998) described role stress as psychological tension encompassing role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload. The sales literature is replete with studies demonstrating the negative link between role stress and a wide array of outcomes including customer-oriented selling performance (e.g., Flaherty et al., 1999), turnover (e.g., Kraft et al.,

2019), job satisfaction (e.g., Behrman & Perreault, 1984), and burnout (e.g., Peasley et al., 2020). However, to-date, only one study has examined overload directly related to the sales job and, to the best of this author's knowledge, no studies have explored the impact of that distinct construct on psychological resources.

Johnson and Sohi (2014) labeled the role overload *uniquely* [emphasis added] experienced by salespeople as boundary-spanning task overload. BSTO is defined as “the extent of overload perceived by salespeople related to their sales-related tasks and activities” (Johnson & Sohi, 2014, p. 73). For example, salespeople are often expected, if not formally required, to concurrently generate new business, service and retain existing business, and power competitive intelligence. Even in team-based support environments, it is not unusual for buyers to lean heavily on the original salesperson to coordinate resources in an effort to solve problems and optimize products or services.

A salesperson's psychological characteristics have been previously implicated in perceptions of stress (Babakus et al., 1999). Continual stressors are thought to inundate an individual's resources and negatively impact psychological and behavioral outcomes (Kahn et al., 1964). For example, B2B sales professionals spend countless hours following-up with prospective customers and resolving problems for existing customers. Individuals engaged in boundary-spanner activities are susceptible to heightened levels of emotional labor as they perform tasks with important outcomes against the competing demands of customers, suppliers, and their employer (Rutherford et al. 2011).

Given the potentially detrimental effects of role stressors on individual resources in general, an argument can be made that BSTO is specifically and negatively related to a

salesperson's psychological resources. The likely results are an erosion of the customer relationship, decreased job performance, an increase in mistakes, and, in extreme cases, deterioration in a salesperson's health.

Based on this discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a. Boundary-spanning task overload negatively affects a salesperson's psychological capital.

H1b. Boundary-spanning task overload negatively affects a salesperson's quiet ego.

3.2 BSTO and SP: mediating roles of PsyCap and QE

Contemporary meta-analyses confirmed a strong and positive relationship between PsyCap and job performance (Avey et al., 2011; Kong et al., 2018; Newman et al., 2014). The relationship between BSTO and PsyCap is less clear. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggested that individuals are most susceptible to stress when they lack the resources to deal with problems in the environment. Several studies, most notably Avey et al. (2009), conceptualized PsyCap as a critical resource to mitigate workplace stressors and found a strong negative association between occupational stress and PsyCap (Liu et al., 2012; Riolli et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2012). In contrast, Kong et al. (2018) analyzed the most studied antecedents of PsyCap and found a weak positive correlation between occupational stress across studies. The authors did not discuss this counterintuitive finding, however, there are three likely explanations: (1) inconsistent operationalization of stressor var-

iables across studies; (2) PsyCap acts as a buffer against stress; or (3) a curvilinear relationship was at play such that lower levels of stress positively activated PsyCap. This inconsistency warrants further study.

PsyCap has been investigated as an intervening variable between various antecedents and individual-level work outcomes. Multiple studies demonstrated that different forms of work support operate through PsyCap to impact job performance (Liu, 2013; Luthans et al., 2008).

PsyCap was also shown to positively mediate the relationship between ambidextrous organization culture and job performance (Lee et al., 2017). An ambidextrous organization is structured to support the contrasting goals of short-term exploitation of opportunities and long-term adaptation to changing customer demands. This type of business orientation, and supporting management structure, is the antithesis of the type of organization that would result in higher levels of BSTO.

To-date, there has been limited application of PsyCap as a distinct construct in the sales research domain. Peterson et al. (2011) established a strong positive relationship between PsyCap and objective sales performance in the financial advisory services. The remaining studies examined individual employee PsyCap as either an outcome of leadership style or as an intervening variable between leadership style and job performance. Authentic and servant leadership styles both positively predicted salesperson PsyCap (Azanza et al. 2018; Bouzari & Karatepe). Interestingly, servant leadership also operated through PsyCap to predict sales performance such that the salespeople had favorable perceptions of service-sales ambidexterity.

To summarize these expected relationships, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2a. A salesperson's psychological capital positively mediates the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and sales performance.

Research on QE is in its infancy. To-date there are no studies that specifically link QE, as a distinct construct, to individual performance. Huffman et al. (2015) suggested that intervening on the QE of workers should be positively associated with organizational performance, however, this hypothesis was not formally tested. Literature on egoistic behavior, in general, provides further guidance with respect to the proposed QE-performance relationship. When individuals engage in self-serving thoughts, feelings, or behaviors, their priority is to engage in self-deception in order to protect the integrity of the ego (Cramer, 1998; Loewenstein, 1967). This defensive posture tends to weed out new information that may facilitate more adaptive behavioral responses. The result is that ego self-enhancement should impair performance (Hodgins, 2008). Similarly, a salesperson who tends toward egoism is more likely to think of themselves as being an exceptional talent and not seek out opportunities for growth or recognize information that may be provide useful in building more successful relationships with prospective and existing customers.

In contrast, the relationship between stress and QE has stronger conceptual footing. Prior studies have investigated QE as either an antecedent to perceptions of stress (see Liu, Isbell, et al., 2020; Wayment et al., 2016; Wayment & Bauer, 2018; Wayment & Cavalo, 2019) or as the outcome of an intervention (see Wayment et al., 2011; Wayment et al., 2015). In all cases, higher levels of QE have been shown to buffer the negative effects of stress on health and well-being.

Although studies on QE are also notably absent in the sales literature, there is emerging research related to each of its sub-factors: detached awareness, inclusive identification, perspective-taking, and growth-mindedness. Emotional intelligence and self-monitoring, which are representative of detached awareness, were found to positively predict sales performance (Panagopoulos & Ogilvie, 2015; Rojell et al., 2006). Cooperation and collaboration, which are facilitated by inclusive identification, were shown to be positively associated with sales performance and customer satisfaction (Kaski et al., 2018; Lussier & Hall, 2018; Murphy & Coughlan, 2018; Palmatier et al., 2006). Empathy and social astuteness, which are forms of perspective-taking, were positively linked to both subjective and objective sales performance (Aggarwal et al., 2005; Dugan, Rouziou, et al., 2019; Guidice & Mero, 2012; McBane, 1995). Lastly, future orientation, an integral part of growth-mindedness, has been shown to positively impact salesperson service behaviors (Jelinek & Ahearne, 2006).

To summarize these expected relationships, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2b. A salesperson's quiet ego positively mediates the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and sales performance.

3.3 BSTO and PWB: mediating roles of PsyCap and QE

Numerous meta-analyses reported a positive link between PsyCap and multiple measures of employee well-being (Avey et al., 2011; Kong et al., 2018; Lupsa et al., 2020; Newman et al., 2014). The relationship between BSTO and PsyCap is less clear. Commonly cited studies demonstrated a strong negative correlation between occupational

stress and PsyCap (Epitropaki, 2013; Liu et al., 2012; Rabenu, et al., 2017; Riolli et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2012). However, a recent examination of reported effects across all studies that included occupational stress as an antecedent to PsyCap found a weak positive association between BSTO and PsyCap. This counterintuitive finding is likely due to the limitations in comparing different operationalizations of workplace stressors and the notion that some level of stress may be conducive to activating psychological resources up to a point.

PsyCap has been investigated as an intervening variable between various stress-related antecedents and individual-level measures of subjective well-being. Job stress (Wang et al., 2017), workaholism (Moyer et al, 2017), and lack of organizational support (Roemer & Harris, 2018) were all found to operate indirectly through PsyCap to influence mental health such that PsyCap buffered the negative effects of the workplace environment. PsyCap has also been shown to positively mediate the relationship between occupational stress and PWB (Mensah & Amponsah-Taiah, 2016).

In the sales literature, well-being has most often been explored as a secondary outcome in response to stress. Role stress (Johnson & Sohi, 2014; Román et al., 2018), personal stress (Peasley et al., 2020), work family conflict (Bande et al., 2015), and coping strategies (Kraft et al., 2019) have been negatively linked to job satisfaction, burnout, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intentions, respectively. Only one study examined salesperson PsyCap as a mediator. Bouzari and Karatepe (2020) found that servant leadership positively predicted salesperson life satisfaction through salesperson PsyCap. No studies to-date have conceptualized salesperson PWB as flourishing or thriving.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3a. A salesperson's psychological capital positively mediates the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and psychological well-being.

There was a long history of research on QE-related issues before the recent advent of QE as a distinct construct (Wayment & Bauer, 2008). These studies tended to emphasize maladaptive outcomes related to excessive self-focus (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, 2014). Now, a growing body of literature has established a strong positive link between QE and multiple measures of health and well-being. For example, Wayment et al. (2011) found that cultivating key characteristics of QE were associated with an increase in self-reported psychological and physical health. Recent studies also extended that association to other contexts including reduced mortality thoughts (Kesebir 2014) and increased satisfaction with do-it-yourself activities (Collier et al., 2020). In both cases, diminished perceptions or experiences of stress appeared to facilitate the positive outcomes.

The process underlying the QE-well-being link was specifically examined in a subsequent series of studies. Wayment, West, and Craddock (2016) investigated the role of the QE in perceptions of stress and life satisfaction for students transitioning to college. Higher reported scores on QE characteristics were positively associated with life satisfaction and this relationship was partially mediated by the positive impact of self-control and self-compassion on perceptions of stress. Similarly, Wayment and Bauer (2018) found that QE had a strong positive correlation with compassionate (vs. self-image) orientation and a reflective growth (vs. self-improvement) motivation. This balance in concerns between the self and others partially mediated the relationship between QE and well-being. Lastly, Liu, Isbell, and Leidner (2020) demonstrated that trait emotional intelligence (EI) mediated the relationship between the QE and subjective well-being. Higher QES scores

promoted higher trait EI scores which subsequently led to increased life satisfaction and less stress.

QE was also found to operate as a mediator in the relationship between materialism and well-being (Watson, 2018). Materialistic values are equated with an excessive focus on the self, an unhealthy attachment to objects or possessions, and unhappiness. In contrast, QE promotes a healthier sense of self and an orientation toward cooperation rather than competition with others. The findings showed that materialism is negatively associated with both QE and with multiple measures of well-being including life satisfaction. Quieter egos mediated the negative effect of materialism on well-being.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3b. A salesperson's quiet ego positively mediates the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and psychological well-being.

3.4 BSTO, PsyCap, and QE: moderating role of national culture

COR theory provides a lens through which to test common cultural interpretations of workplace stress at the individual level, organizational level, and societal level. The experience of stress is a universal experience shared by individuals from all cultures, however, the underlying process through which stressors are perceived and acted upon is culturally construed and differentially impacts performance and well-being (Chun et al., 2006; Hobfoll, 2001, 2002; Kuo, 2011; Lam & Zane, 2004; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Individuals will attempt to sustain their resources through action and cognition and will endeavor to enlist those same resources in proactive coping; but will do so within the

limits set by their resource availability and the allowable channels of behavior and thought outlined by culture and its strictures (Hobfoll, 2001, p. 354). For example, countries are different on cultural values like individualism/collectivism, power distance, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long/short-term orientation, and indulgence/restraint (Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 1980; Minkov & Hofstede, 2012). These values are important factors in determining individual behavior (Hofstede & Bond, 1988).

Culture can have a substantial influence on the types of job stress that exist in the workplace and how that stress is perceived by the individual (Beehr & Glazer, 2001; Laungani, 1993). For example, Narayanan et al. (1999) conducted a cross-cultural examination of job stress and found that one quarter of North American respondents perceived a lack of job autonomy as a problem whereas none of the Indian participants viewed it that way. Emotional responses often differ as well. Workers from individualistic cultures (e.g., U.S.) tend to regulate their feelings less than their peers from collectivistic cultures (e.g., China).

However, successful emotional regulation is linked to positive life outcomes in Western cultures whereas the results are mixed in Eastern cultures (Matsumoto et al., 2008; Wei et al., 2013). The conflicting results may be due to collectivists valuing group harmony and restraining their true feelings to ensure group cohesion. What is clear is that a lack of emotional regulation is associated with maladaptive work and life outcomes.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4a. A salesperson's national culture positively moderates the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and psychological capital such that higher levels of sales and service demand are less depleting to collectivists versus individualists.

H4b. A salesperson's national culture positively moderates the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and quiet ego such that higher levels of sales and service demand are less depleting to collectivists versus individualists.

4. Research method

4.1 Data and sample

This study examines the effect of salespeople's BSTO on their psychological resource caravans and its subsequent effect on SP and PWB. To investigate these effects, the B2B context was chosen due to the prevalence of perceived BSTO which may vary among salespeople and the frequency of demanding customer interactions that threaten to strain psychological capital and quiet ego.

The data set contains usable survey responses from 330 external B2B salespeople representing a broad range of industries in Europe ($n = 200$; 60.6%) and Asia ($n = 130$; 39.4%). European participants were recruited through an online survey panel. Respondents were prescreened for eligibility based on four inclusion criteria: geographic location, native English speaking, full-time employment in the sales profession, and selling to businesses. Asian participants were recruited through CEOs enrolled in an executive MBA program in the Republic of China (Taiwan). Executives whose companies sell goods and/or services to other businesses were identified and then asked to share a link to the online survey with their outside sales representatives. Respondents were then screened

for geographic location, native Mandarin speaking, full-time employment in the sales profession, and selling to businesses.

Summary statistics for the combined sample are provided in Table 1. Participants self-identified as primarily Caucasian (52.42%) or Asian (43.33%) which is consistent with the bifurcated geographic regions. Gender was reasonably balanced between males (55.15%) and females (44.24%). Age of participants ranged from 21 to 70 with the majority clustered between 25 to 55 ($M = 38.92$ years, $SD = 13.16$ years). Total years of sales experience and current tenure fell in lockstep as most participants indicated early-to-mid career status (experience: $M = 8.09$, $SD = 7.94$; tenure, $M = 7.17$, $SD = 7.80$).

4.2 Measures

All measures used in the study are well-established in the sales and psychology literature (see Appendix B). Before answering the survey, the respondent saw the following statement printed before each construct in the salesperson survey: “Below are statements about you with which you may agree or disagree. Using the following Likert scale, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with each statement.” Likewise, the following statement was printed prior to self-reported sales performance: “Below are statements that describe different aspects of your job performance. Using the following Likert scale, indicate your level of performance for each category. Please be truthful.” Experience was operationalized as the number of years that the salesperson had worked in a sales position. Tenure was measured as the number of years that the salesperson had been employed in a sales role with their current employer. For the latent constructs, the original measures – quiet ego (Wayment et al., 2015), adaptive selling (Spiro & Weitz, 1990), and

sales performance (Behrman & Perreault, 1982; Peasley et al., 2020) – were retained for the Europe sample and translated into the target language (traditional Mandarin) for the Asia sample.

Table 1

Sample Statistics

Continuous variables	M	SD	Min	Max	Skew	Kurtosis	Reliability
Age (years)	37.58	13.27	21	70	0.51	-0.95	
Boundary-spanning task overload	2.82	0.07	1	4.33	-0.11	-0.11	0.76
Commission (%)	29.00	27.96	0	100	1.02	0.13	
Flourishing	5.49	0.12	1.88	7	-1.11	1.47	0.93
Market turbulence	1.59	0.11	1	7	-0.85	1.19	0.66
Performance total	4.80	0.27	1.25	7	-0.48	0.61	0.79
Performance 1	4.78	1.23	1	7	-0.31	-0.07	
Performance 2	4.69	1.29	1	7	-0.53	0.06	
Performance 3	4.87	1.33	1	7	-0.62	0.31	
Performance 6	4.86	1.29	1	7	-0.51	0.17	
Psychological capital	4.83	0.08	2	7	0.53	-0.67	0.93
Quiet ego	4.12	0.07	2.29	6.5	0.53	-0.67	0.92
Sales experience (years)	7.85	7.85	0	47	1.96	4.63	

Categorical frequencies	Level	N	%
Gender identity	Male	182	55.15
	Female	146	44.24
	Non gender-binary	2	0.61
Sample	General	200	60.61
	Taiwan	130	39.39

4.3 Dependent variables

4.3.1 Sales performance (SP)

SP was measured with four items (Peasley et al., 2020; adapted from Behrman & Perreault, 1982). The items (see Table 2) asked respondents to rate the following statements: (1) “I am exceeding sales objectives and targets”; (2) “I am generating new customer sales”; (3) “I am generating repeat customer sale”; and (4) “Compared to the average salesperson in my firm, I would rate my performance as...” Response choices were assessed on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (far below average) to 7 (far above average). All items were summed to create a composite variable with higher scores indicating greater levels of sales performance (avg. $\alpha = .86$; Peasley et al., 2020). Self-reported measures of SP have been shown to be a reliable proxy for actual sales performance (Churchill et al., 1985; Sharma et al., 2004) and are standard practice in sales research (Liu, Hochstein, et al., 2020; Sujjan et al., 1994).

4.3.2 Psychological well-being (PWB)

PWB was measured using the eight-item Flourishing Scale (FS; Diener et al., 2010). The items (see Table 2) assessed major aspects of human psychological needs, such as the need for competence, relatedness, self-acceptance, and rewarding and supportive relationships (e.g., “I lead a purposeful and meaningful life”; “I am engaged and interested in my daily activities”; and “I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others”). Responses choices were marked on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly

disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The scale provides a single psychological well-being score between 8 (lowest possible) to 56 (highest possible), inclusive. Higher scores indicate more psychological resources and strengths ($\alpha = .87$; Diener et al., 2010).

4.4 Mediator variables

4.4.1 Psychological capital (PsyCap)

PsyCap was measured with the shortened 12-item version of the psychological capital scale (PCQ-12; Avey et al., 2011). The psychometrically derived items (see Table 2) encompass each facet of PsyCap: hope (four items; adapted from Snyder et al., 1996), self-efficacy (three items; adapted from Parker, 1998), resilience (three items; adapted from Wagnild & Young, 1993), and optimism (two items; adapted from Scheier & Carver, 1985). Sample items are tied to the working world and worded to emphasize something that is happening at the present time (e.g., “If I find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it”; “I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management”; “I usually take stressful things at work in stride”; and “I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job”). Response choices were marked on a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The scale provides a single PsyCap score between 12 (lowest possible) to 72 (highest possible), inclusive. Higher scores indicate a greater sense of control, intentionality, agentic goal pursuit, and positive appraisal of circumstances ($\alpha = >.70$; Avey et al., 2011a).

4.4.2 *Quiet ego (QE)*

QE was measured with the 14-item quiet ego scale (QES; Wayment et al., 2015). The psychometrically derived items (see Table 2) encompass each facet of QE: detached awareness (three items; taken from Brown & Ryan, 2003), inclusive identification (three items; taken from Leary et al., 2008), perspective-taking (four items; taken from Davis, 1983), and growth-mindedness (five items; taken from Ryff, 1989). Sample items assessed individual readiness to think, feel, and behave in ways that are conducive toward balance and growth (e.g., “I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I’m doing”; “The connection between you and a stranger on a bus”; “When I’m upset at someone, I usually try to put myself in his or her shoes for a while”; and “I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world”). Response choices were marked on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale provides a single PsyCap score between 14 (lowest possible) to 70 (highest possible), inclusive. Higher scores are indicative of a stronger ego which means a more harmonized stance between the self and others as well as greater adaptive development over time ($\alpha = .76$; Wayment et al., 2015).

4.5 Independent variables

4.5.1 Boundary-spanning task overload (BSTO)

BSTO was measured with nine sales-specific items (Johnson & Sohi, 2014). The items (see Table 2) asked respondents to indicate their level of agreement with the following statements: (1) “I do not have enough time to identify and search for new business”; (2) “I do not have enough time to call on potential buyers/customers”; (3) “With my current workload, I am unable to generate an adequate amount of new business”; (4) “My customers would like me to call on them more frequently”; (5) “I am able to maintain adequate after-sales service for all my products”; (6) “My customers are extremely happy with the level of service that I provide”; (7) “I do not have enough time to collect information about competitors’ activities”; (8) “I need to be more responsive in dealing with competitive action”; and (9) “I need to react more quickly to competitors’ moves.” Response choices were marked on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale provides a single BSTO score between 9 (lowest possible) to 45 (highest possible), inclusive. Higher scores indicate that the salesperson perceives greater task overload on their ability to concurrently serve existing customers, generate new business, and react to competitors ($\alpha = .82$; Johnson & Sohi, 2014).

4.5.2 Culture

Culture was measured using Hofstede’s (1980) individualism-collectivism (I-C) dimension. The I-C index assigns values between 0 and 100. Higher values are attributed to

individualistic cultures whereas lower values indicate more collectivist cultures. Dummy variables were created for Europe (0) and Asia (1) given that countries in those continents tend to be labeled as individualistic and collectivistic, respectively.

Table 2

Psychometric Properties of Questionnaire Items

Constructs and measurement items	Std. loadings	Construct reliability
Boundary-spanning task overload (Johnson & Sohi, 2014)		
1. I do not have enough time to identify and search for new business.	0.75	0.76
2. I do not have enough time to call on potential buyers/customers.	0.80	
3. With my current workload, I am unable to generate an adequate amount of new business.	0.77	
4. My customers would like me to call on them more frequently.	0.44	
5. I am able to maintain adequate after-sales service for all my products.*	-0.07	
6. My customers are extremely happy with the level of service that I provide.*	0.09	
7. I do not have enough time to collect information about competitors' activities.	0.65	
8. I need to be more responsive in dealing with competitive action.	0.46	
9. I need to react more quickly to competitors' moves.	0.45	
Psychological capital (Avey, Avolio, & Luthans, 2011)		
1. I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management.	0.78	0.90
2. I feel confident contributing to discussions about the company's strategy.	0.77	
3. I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues.	0.64	
4. If I find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it.	0.62	
5. Right now I see myself as being pretty successful at work.	0.65	
6. I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals.	0.77	
7. At this time, I am meeting the work goals that I have set for myself.	0.68	
8. I can be "on my own" so to speak at work if I have to.	0.24	
9. I usually take stressful things at work in stride.	0.60	
10. I can get past difficult times at work because I've experienced difficulty before.	0.57	
11. I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job.	0.71	
12. I'm optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work.	0.61	
Quiet ego (Wayment, Bauer, & Sylaska, 2015)		
1. I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world.	0.44	0.73
2. I find myself doing things without paying much attention.*	0.14	
3. I feel a connection to all living things.	0.61	
4. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.	0.72	
5. For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth.	0.70	
6. I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing.*	0.04	
7. I feel a connection with strangers.	0.42	
8. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to put myself in his or her shoes for a while.	0.62	
9. I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time.	0.58	
10. I rush through activities without being really attentive to them.*	0.11	
11. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from another person's point of view.*	0.11	
12. I feel a connection to people of other races.	0.54	
13. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.	0.58	
14. When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years.*	0.28	
Performance (Peasley et al., 2020)		
1. I am exceeding sales objectives and targets.	0.81	0.90
2. I am generating new customer sales.	0.72	
3. I am generating repeat customer sales.	0.71	
4. Compared to the average salesperson in my firm, I would rate my performance.	0.84	
Psychological well-being (Diener et al., 2010)		
1. I lead a purposeful and meaningful life.	0.80	0.93
2. My social relationships are supportive and rewarding.	0.74	
3. I am engaged and interested in my daily activities.	0.73	
4. I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others.	0.73	
5. I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me.	0.74	
6. I am a good person and live a good life.	0.82	
7. I am optimistic about my future.	0.76	
8. People respect me.	0.84	

* Reverse coded item

4.6 Covariates

The following self-reported control variables, all widely collected and utilized in sales and B2B research (e.g., Bill et al., 2020; Román et al., 2018), were also assessed: age, gender, sales experience, market turbulence, and percentage commission. Market turbulence captured the amount of disruption occurring in the industry which could potentially confound perceptions of customer demandingness. Similarly, salespeople who disproportionately rely on commissions may have a disincentive to engage in boundary spanning activities or may be more sensitive to non-selling activities.

4.7 Analytical approach

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to estimate the final model, examining mediational pathways between BSTO, psychological resources (PsyCap and QE), and SP and PWB outcomes (Harlow, 2014). The hypothesized model is provided in Figure 1. Specifically, the paths were examined from BSTO to psychological resources (PsyCap and QE), and lastly to SP and PWB (flourishing). To allow for possible partial mediation, a path was also specified between BSTO and each of the outcome variables (sales performance and flourishing). Nested intercepts were also included by continent to account for known structure to the sampling frame.

Model comparisons were made by first examining metrics of model fit and then by inspecting the individual parameter estimates. Model fit was assessed by the Comparative Fit Index (criterion: $CFI > 0.90$; Byrne, 1994), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (criterion: $RMSEA < 0.100$; MacCallum et al., 1996), and Standardized Root Mean Square

Residual (criterion: SRMR<0.080; Hu & Bentler, 1999) (see also Harlow, 2014). These indicators provided an overall assessment of which model effects fit the data best. Considering the parameters allowed for an estimate of the direction of association, as well as whether or not a statistically significant association existed (Harlow, 2014). Standardized regression coefficients were used as an estimate of effect size (small= |0.10|, medium= |0.30|, large= |0.50|; Harlow, 2014).

5. Results

5.1 Measurement validation

All variables were examined for univariate distributions to ensure that they were appropriately distributed for the analysis (see Table 1). Most variables were reasonably normally distributed (i.e., skewness, kurtosis < |1.0|; Harlow, 2014). The exception was sales experience (M=7.85 years, SD=7.85 years, skewness=1.96, kurtosis=4.63) which was positively skewed due to there being more salespeople with low to moderate years of selling experience.

Reliability was estimated by coefficient omega for multivariate scales and by correlation for bivariate scales. Coefficient omega for all major constructs was appropriate (i.e., $r_{xx} < 0.70$; Harlow, 2014). However, the estimate for the market turbulence covariate was lower than preferred ($r_{xx} = 0.66$). This result was not seen as a large threat to the validity of the analysis given that its sole purpose was as a control for potential confounds.

5.2 Steps to mitigate common method variance

There was initial concern that common method variance may threaten validity due to the self-reported nature of questionnaire items (see Podsakoff et al., 2003). To address this, a multi-trait multi-method matrix is provided, Table 3. The largest correlations were between variables that were expected to be highly correlated (e.g., PsyCap, QE, $r=0.77$; age, sales experience, $r=0.56$). Many bivariate correlations were small ($r < |0.15|$). When only including the primary variables of interest, the first eigenvalue accounted for 42.74% of the variance of the correlation matrix. Upon inclusion of the covariates, the first eigenvalue of the correlation matrix only accounted for 32.86% of the variance. This result suggests that the variables were not excessively collinear despite their similarity of measurement.

The high correlation between PsyCap and QE runs the additional risk of multicollinearity which is particularly problematic given that both constructs were conceptualized as co-mediators along the same pathway between BSTO and the outcomes of sales performance and psychological well-being. To address this potential issue, the variance inflation factor (VIF) was calculated for each variable. The VIF for PsyCap was appropriate (VIF=2.56). However, the VIF for QE was higher than would be preferred (VIF=4.67). However, a VIF value of less than 5 between two variables is considered reasonable and acceptable (Hair et al., 2009; Stevens, 2012). To further ensure that these were distinct measures, measurement models were fit with PsyCap and QE in the same analysis. Results are discussed in detail below.

Table 3*Multi-Trait Multi-Method Matrix*

	BSTO	PC	QE	PERF	FL	Age	Male gender	Sales experience	Market turbulence	Commission	B2B
BSTO	1										
PC	-0.12	1									
QE	-0.12	0.77	1								
PERF	-0.25	0.19	0.34	1							
FL	-0.11	0.51	0.61	0.28	1						
Age	-0.05	0.56	0.55	0.13	0.28	1					
Male gender identity	-0.12	0.06	0.15	0.02	0.03	0.08	1				
Sales experience	-0.08	0.11	0.20	0.15	0.07	0.56	0.04	1			
Market turbulence	0.15	0.25	0.28	0.06	0.18	0.07	0.11	-0.13	1		
Commission	-0.01	-0.04	0.02	0.07	-0.02	-0.04	-0.02	0.13	-0.08	1	
B2B	-0.02	0.23	0.22	0.05	0.14	0.18	0.01	0.02	0.10	-0.14	1

5.3 Confirmatory factor analysis

Items were parceled into subscales and the model was specified as two factors, for PsyCap and QE. This was done to ensure that the degrees of freedom would not surpass the sample size, which risks unreliable model estimation (Harlow, 2014). Three models were fit: first with the covariance estimated freely, second with the covariance constrained to 1.0 (identical to a single-factor model with all items loading onto the same factor), and third an orthogonal model with the covariance constrained to 0.0 (for further discussion see Harlow, 2014). Across all models, loadings were significant, positive, and large (i.e., $\lambda > 0.40$).

The best fitting model was the correlated factors model (CFI=0.95, RMSEA=0.096, 90% CI [0.041, 0.148], SRMR=0.053). The single-factor model had near reasonable fit by research standards (CFI=0.91, RMSEA=0.127, 90% CI [0.081, 0.175], SRMR=0.062), however it was significantly worse than the correlated factors model ($\chi^2(1, N=110)=17.18, p < 0.001$). The orthogonal model had unacceptable fit (CFI=0.79,

RMSEA=0.191, 90% CI [0.147, 0.238], SRMR=0.174)). These results support the conclusion of the exploratory analysis, that PsyCap and QE should be understood as distinct but highly correlated constructs ($\psi=0.75$, $p<0.001$).

5.4 Factor invariance analysis

Factor invariance testing was performed to ensure similarity of measurement between cultural samples. First, separate models were fit for both the Europe and Asia groups. Next, constraints were applied systematically such that both models had the same values in the order: loadings (lambda matrix), correlation (ψ matrix), intercepts (ν matrix), error variances (theta matrix), and then latent means (eta matrix; Harlow, 2014). Results found heterogeneity of measurement between samples. The best fitting model was when no constraints were applied (CFI=0.94, RMSEA=0.084, 90% CI [0.000, 0.131], SRMR=0.074).

Although the loadings did not significantly lower model fit ($\chi^2(12, N=110)=14.10$, $p=0.2932$), the other fit measures did decrease (CFI=0.91, RMSEA=0.091, 90% CI [0.034, 0.136], SRMR=0.107). These reductions were all within research standards (Harlow, 2014). Assuming further invariance decreased model fit below acceptable limits (i.e. CFI>0.90, RMSEA, SRMS<0.10). The inter-factor correlation was larger for the Asia sample ($\psi=0.90$, $p<0.001$), though it was still large, positive, and significant for the Europe sample ($\psi=0.59$, $p<0.001$). Reliability was strong for both measures in both samples (PsyCap: Europe, $\omega=0.88$; Asia, $\omega=0.91$; QE: Europe, $\omega=0.76$; Asia, $\omega=0.79$).

For the purpose of this analysis, the most important objective is to identify invariance of loadings, because it is the author's intention to estimate the final model using a path analysis. Further invariance may inform psychometric understanding but having identified reasonable fit, assuming invariance of loadings is sufficient for this analysis.

5.5 Direct and indirect effects: SEM analysis

Four iterations of the final model were estimated to examine possible instances of cultural moderation. In all cases, the mediational path analysis had the same structure, from BSTO to PsyCap and QE, and then to SP and PWB. Additionally, a path was included from BSTO to SP and PWB, to allow for partial mediation. It was hypothesized that mediation would occur along the path from BSTO to PsyCap and QE. To test this, these paths and their intercepts were first estimated freely. Next, the paths were constrained to be equal, and in the third iteration the intercepts constrained to be equal. In the fourth iteration, the covariance between PsyCap and QE was constrained to be equal. The paths and intercepts for all other variables were constrained to be equal in order to focus on moderation from BSTO to SP. Table 4 provides the model fit estimates for all models, and Table 5 provides the parameter estimates.

Table 4*SEM Analysis Model Fit Statistics*

Invariance assumed	χ^2	DF	<i>p</i>	CFI	RMSEA	90% CILL	90% CI UL	SRMR
Pattern	13.315	8	0.101	0.967	0.110	0.00	0.21	0.061
Regression	14.015	10	0.172	0.975	0.085	0.00	0.181	0.071
Intercepts	49.889	12	<0.001	0.765	0.240	0.173	0.31	0.198
Covariances	15.948	12	0.194	0.976	0.077	0.00	0.168	0.060

Table 5*Path Analysis Parameter Estimates*

Parameter	Freely estimated model						Invariance assumed					
	Europe sample			Asia sample			Europe sample			Asia sample		
	PE	Z	p	PE	Z	p	PE	Z	p	PE	Z	p
BSTO -> PERF	-0.43	-4.31	<0.001	-0.37	-4.31	<0.001	-0.44	-4.46	<0.001	-0.39	-4.46	<0.001
BSTO -> FL	0.06	0.80	0.422	0.08	0.80	0.422	0.06	0.82	0.4110	0.08	0.82	0.411
BSTO -> PC	-0.29	-2.63	0.008	-0.45	-3.01	0.003	-0.34	-3.81	<0.001	-0.34	-3.81	<0.001
BSTO -> QE	-0.51	-5.14	<0.001	-0.71	-6.12	0.000	-0.53	-7.78	<0.001	-0.68	-7.78	<0.001
PC -> PERF	0.32	3.42	0.001	0.28	3.42	0.001	0.31	3.33	<0.001	0.27	3.33	<0.001
PC -> FS	0.50	7.74	<0.001	0.68	7.74	<0.001	0.49	7.76	<0.001	0.68	7.76	<0.001
QE -> PERF	-0.31	-2.59	0.010	-0.20	-2.59	0.010	-0.30	-2.59	0.010	-0.20	-2.59	0.010
QE -> FS	0.21	2.33	0.020	0.22	2.33	0.020	0.21	2.32	0.020	0.22	2.32	0.020
	Intercepts											
PC	7.87	14.99	<0.001	9.92	12.92	<0.001	8.17	18.94	<0.001	9.22	19.52	<0.001
QE	8.88	18.83	<0.001	13.01	21.66	<0.001	9.06	27.60	<0.001	12.71	27.91	<0.001
	Effect size R2											
PC	0.09			0.20			0.12			0.11		
QE	0.26			0.51			0.28			0.46		
PERF	0.24			0.18			0.25			0.17		
FS	0.36			0.60			0.35			0.62		

Note: PE represents parameter estimate. The standardized coefficient is reported

Clear support was found for mediation. Across all models, the path coefficients from BSTO to PsyCap and QE were moderate to large, significant, and negative (i.e., $|\gamma| > 0.30$, $p < 0.01$). This supports hypotheses 1a and 1b. The path from BSTO to sales performance was also significant ($\beta = -0.44$, $p < 0.001$), however, the relationship with PWB was generally nonsignificant and small ($|\gamma| < 0.10$). The mediational paths from PsyCap to SP and PWB were consistently large and positive, supporting hypotheses 2a and 3a ($\beta > 0.30$, $p < 0.001$). That said, the mediational path from QE to SP was counter to expectations, estimated as negative, moderate, and significant ($\beta = -0.29$,

$p=0.010$) instead of positive as hypothesized. This finding did not support hypothesis 2b. The path from QE to PWB was small, but still significant, providing support for hypothesis 3b ($\beta=0.21$, $p=0.020$).

Examining moderation, partial identification was found. Assuming invariance of paths, and the covariance between PsyCap and QE, resulted in only a slight increase in the Chi-squared statistics ($X^2(4, N=110)=2.63$, $p=0.6210$). Model fit by other statistics improved between the freely estimated model (CFI=0.97, RMSEA=0.110, 90% CI [0.000, 0.210], SRMR=0.061) and the model assuming invariance of paths and inter factor correlation (CFI=0.98, RMSEA=0.077, 90% CI [0.000, 0.168], SRMR=0.060). However, assuming invariance of intercepts drastically reduced model fit (CFI=0.765, RMSEA=0.240, 90% CI [0.173, 0.310], SRMR=0.198).

Investigating the parameter estimates, the collectivists (Asia) sample rated PsyCap and QE higher on average (PsyCap, $\mu=9.22$, $p<0.001$; QE, $\mu=12.71$, $p<0.001$) than the individualists (Europe) sample (PsyCap, $\mu=8.17$, $p<0.001$; QE, $\mu=9.06$, $p<0.001$). Examining the parameter estimates for when the path coefficients were freely estimated, the associations between BSTO and both PsyCap and QE were stronger for the collectivists (Asia) sample (BSTO→PC, $\gamma=-0.45$, $p=0.003$; BSTO→QE, $\gamma=-0.71$, $p<0.001$) than they were for the individualists (Europe) sample (BSTO→PC, $\gamma=-0.29$, $p=0.008$; BSTO→QE, $\gamma=-0.51$, $p<0.001$). Under the assumption of invariance, most standardized estimates were similar. The exception was the path from BSTO to QE, which retained a more negative association for the collectivists (Asia) sample ($\beta=-0.68$, $p<0.001$) relative to the individualists (Europe) sample ($\beta=-0.53$, $p<0.001$). This finding indicates moderation along the path from BSTO to QE which provides support for hypotheses 4a and 4b.

5.6 *Post-hoc analyses*

Seeing the path coefficients for QE switch from positive to negative, a follow up analysis was conducted to consider the possibility that there may be curvilinear relationship between both resource caravans and the outcomes. This was performed as a separate analysis due to how sensitive SEM model estimation is to multicollinearity (for a discussion of this issue, see Little et al., 2007). Mixed effects modeling was used, with random intercepts by continent. The same outcome variables, SP and PWB, were used but the sales performance measure was summed into a single scale of SP to avoid overfitting the data. For each outcome, four models were examined: linear effects only, a quadratic effect for the PsyCap coping mechanism, a quadratic effect for the QE coping mechanism, and both effects as quadratic. Model fit comparisons were made using the Deviance, Akaike (AIC), Bayesian (BIC), and Marginal R² information criteria (Brown & Prescott, 2014). Model fit statistics are reported in Table 6, and parameter estimates in Table 7.

For both outcomes, the linear model had the best overall fit to the data, followed by the model with quadratic effect of QE. A quadratic effect of PsyCap resulted in larger decreases to model fit. Examining specific parameter estimates, consistent with the SEM analysis, PsyCap had a large, significant parameter estimate (SP: $\beta=0.39$, $p<0.001$; SWB, $\beta=0.59$, $p<0.001$) and a nonsignificant quadratic parameter. This supports the simple mediational paths identified in the mediation analysis.

In contrast, for QE, a curvilinear relationship was identified for with SP. A U-shaped relationship was identified with a positive quadratic component ($\beta=0.10$, $p=0.011$). The linear association was not significant ($\beta=-0.02$, $p=0.827$), indicating that this was a

symmetrical U association. The regions of significance analysis for quadratic trends were used to evaluate the values of QE scores that were significantly associated with SP (Preacher et al., 2006). The 15% of salespeople with the highest QE scores and the lowest QE scores tended toward the highest ratings of SP ($p < 0.05$). In other words, the best salespeople tended to have the quietest (but not silent) ego or the loudest ego.

A quadratic relationship was also identified between QE and PWB, however, this time it was an inverted U-shape ($\beta = -0.09$, $p = 0.017$). Additionally, the linear association was also significant and positive ($\beta = 0.44$, $p < 0.001$). The regions of significance indicated that, across all values of QE, there was a significant positive association with PWB ($p < 0.05$). That said, the association was strongest with moderate levels of QE, neither too noisy nor too quiet. This curvilinear relationship may help explain some of the counterintuitive and inconsistent findings of the SEM analysis.

Table 6
Regression Analysis Model Fit Statistics

Model	AIC	BIC	Deviance	Marginal R²	Df
<u>Outcome: Flourishing</u>					
Both linear	2107.30	2125.65	2097.30	0.54	5
Quadratic PC	2119.73	2141.75	2107.73	0.54	6
Quadratic QE	2115.01	2137.03	2103.01	0.55	6
Both quadratic	2126.87	2152.56	2112.87	0.55	7
<u>Outcome: Performance</u>					
Both linear	1858.10	1876.45	1848.10	0.23	5
Quadratic PC	1868.84	1890.86	1856.84	0.24	6
Quadratic QE	1863.42	1885.44	1851.42	0.24	6
Both quadratic	1875.89	1901.58	1861.89	0.26	7

Table 7*Regression Analysis Parameter Estimates*

Outcome: Flourishing												
Predictor	Linear			Quadratic PC			Quadratic QE			Both Quadratic		
	PE	Z	p	PE	Z	p	PE	Z	p	PE	Z	p
Intercept	0.16	1.416	0.157	0.16	1.38	0.167	0.24	2.01	0.045	0.23	1.89	0.058
PC	0.58	8.528	<0.001	0.58	8.47	<0.001	0.58	8.66	<0.001	0.59	8.68	<0.001
PC ²	-	-	-	0.00	0.00	0.999	-	-	-	0.03	0.71	0.480
QE	0.38	4.561	<0.001	0.38	4.55	<0.001	0.43	5.07	<0.001	0.44	5.10	<0.001
QE ²	-	-	-	-	-	-	-0.09	-2.28	0.023	-0.09	-2.39	0.017

Outcome: Performance												
Predictor	Linear			Quadratic PC			Quadratic QE			Both Quadratic		
	PE	Z	p	PE	Z	p	PE	Z	p	PE	Z	p
Intercept	-1.47	-17.91	<0.001	-1.50	-16.86	<0.001	-1.56	-17.30	<0.001	-1.57	-16.87	<0.001
PC	0.39	5.85	<0.001	0.40	6.01	<0.001	0.38	5.78	<0.001	0.39	5.83	<0.001
PC ²	-	-	-	0.06	1.58	0.114	-	-	-	0.03	0.79	0.428
QE	0.04	0.49	0.625	0.04	0.47	0.639	-0.02	-0.26	0.793	-0.02	-0.22	0.827
QE ²	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.11	2.90	0.004	0.10	2.55	0.011

Note: PE represents parameter estimate. The standardized coefficient is reported

6. Discussion

This research endeavored to establish the utility of positive resource caravans, PsyCap and QE, as explanatory factors and buffers in the relationship between a stressor unique to salespeople, BSTO, and both SP and PWB in Europe and Asia. Additionally, the moderating of culture was examined for potential boundary conditions in the underlying process. All but one of the hypotheses were supported (see Table 8). Surprisingly, a salesperson's QE was found to negatively mediate the relationship between BSTO and SP which contradicted the positive expectation outlined in H2b. These findings have several implications for scholars and practitioners.

Table 8*Support for Hypotheses*

#	Hypothesis	Support
H1a	Boundary-spanning task overload negatively affects a salesperson's psychological capital.	Y
H1b	Boundary-spanning task overload negatively affects a salesperson's quiet ego.	Y
H2a	A salesperson's psychological capital positively mediates the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and sales performance.	Y
H2b	A salesperson's quiet ego positively mediates the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and sales performance.	N
H3a	A salesperson's psychological capital positively mediates the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and salesperson well-being.	Y
H3b	A salesperson's quiet ego positively mediates the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and salesperson well-being.	Y
H4a	A salesperson's national culture positively moderates the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and psychological capital such that higher levels of sales and service demand are less depleting to collectivists versus individualists.	Y
H4b	A salesperson's national culture positively moderates the relationship between boundary-spanning task overload and quiet ego such that higher levels of sales and service demand are less depleting to collectivists versus individualists.	Y

6.1 Theoretical implications

First, this study extends prior investigations of salesperson role overload (Babakus et al., 1996; Jones et al., 2007) and, specifically, BSTO (Johnson & Sohi, 2014). Contrary to previous findings which found non-significant effects of role overload on SP, BSTO exhibited a negative and medium-sized direct effect on self-reported SP. This new finding may reflect further increases in the expectations and demands placed on salespeople to balance sales and service activities. Additionally, the large and negative direct effect of BSTO on both PsyCap and QE incorporates a psychosocial aspect of the salesperson

psyche that has previously not been explored. Top sales performers are often lauded for their seemingly impenetrable self-confidence and unwavering resilience in the face of customer rejection or demands. However, a depleted salesperson ego, short of emotional exhaustion and burnout, may result in an overcorrection of behavior toward acquiescing to the customer at the expense of mutually beneficial outcomes for both organizations.

Second, the identification of intervening variables, PsyCap and QE, in the relationship between BSTO and both SP and PWB fills in critical gaps in the literature. Prior studies that were unable to establish a direct link between role overload and salesperson performance suggested that there may be underlying mechanisms through which role stress operates on important outcomes. This study provides evidence that PsyCap and QE play important, albeit contrasting, mediational roles in the relationship between BSTO and SP. PsyCap, as expected, appears to act as a buffer such that the greater the pool of HERO resources, the less perceived boundary spanning stress and the greater ability to work toward actualizing performance goals.

QE, a newly discovered phenomenon, demonstrated curvilinear mediation such that salespeople with the quietest (but not silent) and the loudest egos self-reported higher levels of sales performance. This finding is counterintuitive given that more moderate (balanced) egos have repeatedly been shown to reduce perceptions of stress and increase well-being in the psychological research domain (e.g., Liu et al., 2020; Wayment et al., 2016; Wayment & Bauer, 2018). However, this finding raises interesting questions as to whether objective performance would contradict these subjective evaluations. Noisy egos are subject to confirmation bias which may provide partial explanation for this finding (e.g., Campbell & Buffardi, 2008; Nickerson, 1998). In contrast, quiet egos tend to focus

on the needs of others at the expense of themselves. This may suggest that the salespeople are being overly compliant to customers and missing out on opportunities to co-create long term value through more mutually beneficial pricing and/or problem-solving. The Europe sample tended toward noisier egos whereas the Asia sample tended toward quieter egos which may suggest cultural differences in the effectiveness of egoism in each context.

Third, this study extends emergent assessments of personal well-being by focusing on psychosocial flourishing which encompasses good relationships, autonomy, competence, and a sense of purpose, as well as feelings of happiness and satisfaction. The impact of various types of stress on a salesperson's subjective well-being has been extensively researched across multiple domains (e.g., Bande et al., 2015; Johnson & Sohi, 2014; Kraft et al., 2019; Peasley et al., 2020; Román et al., 2018). These approaches have tended to focus on the diminution, rather than enhancement, of life outcomes. This study opens new doors by introducing the concept of psychological well-being through flourishing (Diener et al., 2010; Huppert & So, 2013) and identifying important pathways to boosting a broad array of positive psychosocial outcomes. PsyCap and QE were both found to positively mediate the relationship between BSTO and salesperson PWB (measured as flourishing). These findings reinforce the spiral of gains across work and life outcomes that come from interrelated pools of positive psychological resources. Interestingly, salespeople with more balanced (moderate) QE self-reported higher levels of psychosocial functioning. There appears to be an inherent trade-off in the selling profession between the level ego needed to perform successfully and the level needed to thrive across all domains of life. This tension warrants further examination.

Fourth, employing a cross-cultural sampling frame revealed important boundary conditions to how positive resource caravans may operate. The collectivists (Asia) sample self-reported higher levels of PsyCap and QE compared to the individualists (Europe) sample; this finding was especially true for QE. National culture, as expected, moderated the relationship between BSTO and both PsyCap and QE such that higher levels of sales and service demands were less depleting to collectivists (Asia) versus individualists (Europe). Clearly, what is considered positive in one culture or context may not necessarily be considered positive in another culture or context. While the link between psychological resources and PWB may be more universal in that greater PsyCap and higher QE predict flourishing across life domains, the “positive” nature of QE is less clear with respect to performance outcomes in a B2B selling context; quieter (noisier) egos appear to facilitate better sales outcomes in Asia (Europe).

6.2 Managerial implications

Lastly, the managerial implications of this study are far-reaching. Negative sales outcomes resulting from B2B salesperson performance and well-being have exponentially large bottom-line impacts. Identifying factors that may explain when and how salespeople underperform in juggling sales and service responsibilities are certain to inform the design of interventions, training protocols, and organizational structures to promote positive outcomes.

Both PsyCap and QE are considered state-like psychological resources that are potentially malleable to positive change through intervention (Luthans et al., 2017; Wayment

& Bauer, 2008, 2018). Perhaps, as important, positive psychological resources can be developed and changed through relatively short training interventions (e.g., PsyCap: Dello Russo & Stoykova, 2015; Ertosun et al., 2015; Luthans et al., 2006; QE: Huffman, Irving, et al., 2015; Wayment, Collier, et al., 2015). These interventions may prove to be faster, more scalable, and cost-effective for sales managers to implement.

For example, Huffman, Irving and Wayment (2015) emphasized the need to find alternative approaches to mindfulness programs for businesses and other organizations. The authors suggested that the demonstrated benefits of mindfulness training in those domains (see Hyland et al., 2015) has not led to meaningful adoption due to: (1) societal reluctance to embrace mindsets that counter the pursuit of self-interest; and (2) the resources (e.g., time and money) required to implement mindfulness-based interventions. Utilizing QE contemplation (QEC; Wayment, Collier, et al., 2015) recordings yield comparative advantages given the closer alignment between the pursuit of human excellence that underlies the QE construct and bottom-line business objectives. The QEC can also be self-administered via mobile app which could extend the positive benefits over time.

Overall, higher salesperson psychological resource levels are advantageous and, in a context of BSTO, are related to better psychosocial outcomes which is aligned with the literature on human functioning (Bandura, 1997; Carver & Scheier, 1998; Hobfoll, 1998, 2001, 2002). However, few studies have examined whether having too much or too little of a resource can be a positive or negative within or across contexts. The finding that QE, a previously unexplored construct in the sales domain, has a U-shaped relationship with sales performance may help sales managers better understand how and where to target support for underperforming salespeople.

This study suggests that a balanced ego may not be preferred when it comes to driving sales results. Quieter egos that put the interests of the customer above all else and noisier egos that place their self-interest above all else appear to outperform their peers, assuming concurrently high levels of PsyCap as well. Sales managers would be well advised to assess for PsyCap and QE, as well as track and monitor these personal assets against objective sales and customer performance data over time. Training interventions should be implemented to enhance and maintain higher levels of PsyCap, whereas moderate levels of QE may need to be amplified or suppressed. Additionally, sales managers might consider conducting a retrospective analysis of customer satisfaction and attrition based on current PsyCap and QE profiles of the salesforce to determine if a mismatch in levels of QE, in particular, might explain negative outcomes.

6.3 Limitations and future research

No study is without limitations that present opportunities for enhancement and interesting avenues for future exploration. First, because the cross-sectional design simultaneously assessed the exposure and outcomes, the findings are solely descriptive and provide preliminary data to support further research and experimentation. Caution should also be exercised in discerning the direction of association between different variables. Future research should consider the use of longitudinal or experimental designs to validate the identified relationships and their underlying process of change over time.

Second, different approaches and platforms were utilized to recruit participants which may have inadvertently introduced bias in the representativeness of respondents

and in the accuracy of their responses. Convenience samples from online panels, regardless of the reputation of the panel provider, often prompt questions about the quality of data. The online panel responses were aggregated with offline data gleaned through snowball sampling. Future research should attempt to partner with corporations within and across industries to enhance the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the data.

Third, larger sample sizes would facilitate a more robust evaluation of mediational models which were necessarily constrained due to issues with degrees of freedom. Increasing the number of parameters would allow for consideration of the standalone effects of the various dimensions of PsyCap and QE. Each facet may contribute differentially on an individual-level which may assist in targeting training interventions to the unique needs of a given salesperson. Additionally, the data set included a wide array of B2B sectors, however, the sample sizes across sectors were insufficient for robust analytic comparison. Future studies should strive to for sample sizes in excess of 1,000 salespeople to allow for an examination of the contribution of the variables underlying the higher order construct.

Fourth, this study examines the effects of positive resource caravans on self-reported salesperson performance and well-being but does not capture objective data that could provide a more detailed picture. Specifically, future research could match objective data from dyadic buyer-seller relationship to include 360° measures of performance such as actual sales, customer satisfaction scores, and manager evaluations at the individual-level over time. Opportunities also exist to aggregate positive resource data into collective measures of positive resources (e.g., collective PsyCap and collective QE) at the business unit or organization levels to compare against objective performance data over time.

Fifth, cultural or cross-cultural differences in stress perceptions and the employment of positive resource caravans should be replicated in other continents, countries, and cultures. The differential impact of positive resource caravans should also be investigated longitudinally to see how these operating mechanisms ebb and flow within and across industries. There is a persistent debate as to whether globalization reflects convergence or promotes cultural identity. Future research could also attempt to unpack the implications of this tension on cross-cultural selling.

Lastly, the utility of PsyCap and QE as coping mechanisms to buffer stress and promote both performance and well-being is dependent upon efficacious and accessible sales training interventions. There is a dearth of intervention studies targeting salespeople and, although standard PsyCap and QE tools can be generalized, attempts should be made to tailor micro-level interventions to fit the selling context. Future research should adapt and test PsyCap and QE interventions for use in the field.

7. Conclusions

Prior research has highlighted the rising expectations and demands of modern buyers for salespeople to be more knowledgeable, accessible, and service-oriented (Cuevas, 2018; Viio & Grönroos, 2014); including coordinating organization resources in support of customers after the sale (Jones et al., 2005). These tacit stipulations can inundate sales professionals who are under significant pressure to develop new business and both retain and grow existing business. The result is that sales has become a key boundary-spanning role with both internal and external expectations and mounting stress to deliver results before and after the initial sale (Behrman & Perreault, 1984; Hult, 2011).

Contrary to prior studies, this research establishes a direct and negative association between BSTO and both SP and PWB. However, this relationship is accounted for by PsyCap and QE which act as positive resource caravans to buffer the deleterious effects of BSTO and promote SP and PWB. This underlying process, grounded in COR theory, suggests that salespeople resources aren't strictly depleted, but rather that their energy ebbs and flows organically and performs in different ways when threatened. Designing sales training interventions that balance self-protective thoughts and feelings (e.g., egoistic) with more other-focused thoughts and feelings (e.g., compassionate) could be a game changer in strengthening personal and occupational resources for B2B sales professionals.

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APPENDIX A
IRB Approval for Study

THE
UNIVERSITY
OF RHODE ISLAND
DIVISION OF RESEARCH
AND ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT

OFFICE OF RESEARCH INTEGRITY
70 Lower College Road, Suite 2, Kingston, RI 02881 USA
p: 401.874.4328 f: 401.874.4814 web.uri.edu/researchcondev/office-of-research-integrity



FWA: 00003132
IRB: 00000599
DATE: September 4, 2020

TO: Christy Ashley
FROM: University of Rhode Island IRB

STUDY TITLE: Salesperson Perceptions
IRB REFERENCE #: 1651491-3
LOCAL REFERENCE #: IRB2021-037
SUBMISSION TYPE: New

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
EFFECTIVE DATE: September 4, 2020

REVIEW CATEGORY: EXEMPT 2(i)

Thank you for your submission of materials for this research study. The University of Rhode Island IRB has determined this project falls into the **EXEMPT REVIEW** category according to federal regulations 45 CFR 46. Per URI IRB policy, the project has been reviewed by either the IRB Chair or the IRB Administrator. **Approval is valid for the duration of the project.**

No changes to procedures involving human subjects may be made without prior IRB review and approval. You must promptly notify the Office of Research Integrity of any problems that occur during the course of your work using Appendix S - Event Reporting.

If you have any general questions, please contact us by email at researchintegrity@etal.uri.edu. For study related questions, please contact us via **project mail through IRBNet**. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.



Matthew Delmonico, Ph.D., MPH
IRB Chair

APPENDIX B

English and Mandarin Surveys

Language

English

Mandarin

PERF = Salesperson performance [1 = Far Below Average, 7 = Far Above Average]

PERF_1 I am exceeding sales objectives and targets.

PERF_2 I am generating new customer sales.

PERF_3 I am generating repeat customer sales.

PERF_4 Compared to the average salesperson in my firm, I would rate my performance.

我超越銷售目標。(1)

我正開發新的客戶銷售。(2)

我正開發回頭客的銷售。(3)

與我公司的平均銷售人員相比，我可對我的表現進行了評分。(4)

FL = Flourishing [1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree]

FL_1 I lead a purposeful and meaningful life

FL_2 My social relationships are supportive and rewarding

FL_3 I am engaged and interested in my daily activities

FL_4 I actively contribute to the happiness and well-being of others

FL_5 I am competent and capable in the activities that are important to me

FL_6 I am a good person and live a good life

FL_7 I am optimistic about my future

FL_8 People respect me

我的生活有目標和意義。(1)

我的社交關係富支持性和令我有所有得著。(2)

我對日常活動又投入又感興趣。(3)

我積極為其他人的快樂和福祉作出貢獻。(4)

我能勝任並能夠做到對我重要的事情。(5)

我是一個好人，並過著好的生活。(6)

我對我的未來樂觀。(7)

別人尊重我。(8)

AS = Adaptive selling [1 = Strongly disagree, 7 = Strongly agree]

AS_1 I like to experiment with different sales approaches.

AS_2 I am very flexible in the selling approach that I use.

AS_3 I try to understand how one customer differs from another.

我喜歡嘗試不同的銷售方式。(1)

我使用的銷售方式非常靈活。(2)

我會試圖了解一個客戶與另一個客戶的不同之處。(3)

QE = Quiet ego [1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree]

QE_1 I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world.

QE_2 I find myself doing things without paying much attention. (R)

QE_3 I feel a connection to all living things.

QE_4 Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

QE_5 For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth.

QE_6 I do jobs or tasks automatically, without being aware of what I'm doing. (R)

QE_7 I feel a connection with strangers.
QE_8 When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to put myself in his or her shoes for a while.
QE_9 I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time.
QE_10 I rush through activities without being really attentive to them. (R)
QE_11 I sometimes find it difficult to see things from another person's point of view. (R)
QE_12 I feel a connection to people of other races.
QE_13 I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
QE_14 When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years. (R)
我認為重要的是要有新的體驗，挑戰你對於自己及世界的想法。(1)
我發現自己做的事情沒有引起太多關注。(2)
我覺得所有生活事物都有關聯。(3)
在批評某人之前，我會先想像一下，如果我站在他的立場，我會有甚麼反應。(4)
對我來說，生活是一個連續性的學習、變化和成長的過程。(5)
我會主動進行許多工作或任務，不需要知道該項工作或任務的目的為何。(6)
我會關心陌生人。(7)
當我對某人生氣時，我會試著設身處地想一下。(8)
我覺得從小時後到現在，已經進步、成長許多了。(9)
在許多活動中，我並沒有真正花時間及精神參與。(10)
我有時發現很難從另一個人的觀點來看事情。(11)
我能關心不同種族的人。(12)
在做出決定之前，我會盡力了解每個人不同意的原因。(13)
當我認真思考後，發覺從出生以來，我並沒有多大的進步。(14)

PC = Psychological capital [1 = Strongly disagree, 6 = Strongly agree]

PC_1 I feel confident in representing my work area in meetings with management.
PC_2 I feel confident contributing to discussions about the company's strategy.
PC_3 I feel confident presenting information to a group of colleagues.
PC_4 If I find myself in a jam at work, I could think of many ways to get out of it.
PC_5 Right now I see myself as being pretty successful at work.
PC_6 I can think of many ways to reach my current work goals.
PC_7 At this time, I am meeting the work goals that I have set for myself.
PC_8 I can be "on my own" so to speak at work if I have to.
PC_9 I usually take stressful things at work in stride.
PC_10 I can get past difficult times at work because I've experienced difficulty before.
PC_11 I always look on the bright side of things regarding my job.
PC_12 I'm optimistic about what will happen to me in the future as it pertains to work.
我有信心在與管理層的會議中擔任我工作領域的代表。(1)
我有信心為有關公司戰略的討論做出貢獻。(2)
我有信心向一群同事報告資訊。(3)
如果我發現自己在工作中陷入困境，我可以想出很多方法來擺脫困境。(4)
現在，我認為自己在工作中相當成功。(5)
我可以想到許多方法來實現我目前的工作目標。(6)
目前，我正在實現為自己設定的工作目標。(7)
如果需要的話我可以「獨自一人」在工作中實踐。(8)
我通常可以從容地處理一些讓人感到焦慮的事。(9)
我能度過工作中的困難時期，是因為我以前也曾遇過困難。(10)
關於工作，我總是能看見光明的一面。(11)
我對於工作及其未來會發生的事感到樂觀。(12)

BSTO = Boundary-spanning task overload [1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree]

BSTO_1 I do not have enough time to identify and search for new business.

BSTO_2 I do not have enough time to call on potential buyers/customers.

BSTO_3 With my current workload, I am unable to generate an adequate amount of new business.

BSTO_4 My customers would like me to call on them more frequently.

BSTO_5 I am able to maintain adequate after-sales service for all my products. (R)

BSTO_6 My customers are extremely happy with the level of service that I provide. (R)

BSTO_7 I do not have enough time to collect information about competitors' activities.

BSTO_8 I need to be more responsive in dealing with competitive action.

BSTO_9 I need to react more quickly to competitors' moves.

我沒有足夠的時間來確定和搜索新業務。(1)

我沒有足夠的時間拜訪潛在的買家/客戶。(2)

以目前的工作量，我無法產生足夠的新業務。(3)

我的客戶希望我更頻繁地拜訪他們。(4)

我能夠為我所有的產品維持足夠的售後服務。(5)

我的客戶對我提供的服務水平感到非常滿意。(6)

我沒有足夠的時間來收集有關競爭對手活動的信息。(7)

我需要在應對競爭性行為時更加敏感。(8)

我需要對競爭對手的舉動做出更快的反應。(9)

MT = Market turbulence [1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree]

MT_1 In our kind of business, customers' product preferences change quite a bit over time

MT_2 Our customers tend to look for new product all the time

MT_3 New customers tend to have product-related needs that are different from those of our existing customer

在我們的業務中，客戶對於產品的偏好會隨著時間改變。(1)

我們的客戶總是在尋找新的產品。(2)

新客戶往往會有與產品相關的需求，而這些需求與我們現有客戶的需求不同。(3)

COMP = Percent commission

What percent of your total compensation is from commission? (sliding scale from 0% to 100%)

COMP 請滑動軸線從 0%縮放到 100%。

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

您的總薪酬中有百分之幾來自佣金？(4)



EXP_SALES = Sales experience in the field (in years)

SEF 你在最近待的一家公司中從事了多久的銷售工作？（以年計算）

TENURE_SALES = How long have you worked in sales for your current company (in years)?

SEC 你幫最近的一位雇主工作了多長時間？（以年計算）

GENDER = Gender

GNDR 請問你的性別？

男性 (1)

女性 (2)

無性別／第三性別 (3)

不告知 (4)

AGE = Age

AGE 請問你幾歲？（以年為單位）

RACE = Race

EDUCATION = Education level

EDU 你的教育程度？

高中或高中以下 (1)

高中學歷 (2)

大學在學 (3)

大專學位 (4)

學士學位 (5)

碩士在學 (6)

碩士學位 (7)

博士學位，法律或醫學學位或同等學歷 (8)

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