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**Sequential Logic concerning the Dualities of Sales  
Performance and Job Satisfaction in B2B Relationships of  
Services Firms**

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**Sequential Logic concerning the Dualities of Sales Performance and Job Satisfaction in B2B Relationships of Services Firms**

**Abstract**

**Purpose** –To verify the sequential logic between the dualities of salespeople’s objective and subjective sales performance, and their economic and non-economic job satisfaction.

**Design/Methodology/approach** – A questionnaire survey based on a deductive approach. The sample consists of 732 multi-sized firms in Norway belonging to a range of many different industries and within the service-oriented business sector with a response rate of 53.1%.

**Findings** – Salespeople’s economic job satisfaction relates positively to their non-economic job satisfaction. However, salespeople’s objective sales performance does not relate to their economic nor non-economic job satisfaction, but salespeople’s subjective sales performance bridges to their economic job satisfaction.

**Research limitations/implications** – This study provides understanding of structural properties of the dualities between salespeople’s sales performance and salespeople’s job satisfaction. It also provides an understanding of the antecedents of job satisfaction. Suggestion for further research are provided.

**Managerial Implications** – Offers guidance for sales managers to understand the link between performance and satisfaction of salespeople in B2B relationships within services firms. A lesson learned is that there is a sequential logic of cause-and-effect between the dualities of sales performance and job satisfaction.

**Originality/Value** – Contextualizes the sequential logic of the dualities between salespeople’s sales performance and salespeople’s job satisfaction in B2B relationships within services firms. It also sheds light on the interrelationships between the constructs of objective and subjective sales performance and economic and non-economic job satisfaction.

**Keywords:** economic job satisfaction, non-economic job satisfaction, objective performance, subjective performance, salesperson, sales, business relationships.

**JEL classification codes:** L25: Firm Performance; L8: Industry Studies: Services; M12: Personnel Management; M31: Marketing

## Sequential Logic concerning the Dualities of Sales Performance and Job Satisfaction in B2B Relationships of Services Firms

### 1. Introduction

Sales management in both academia and practice has generally recognized the importance of salespeople in boosting corporate performance (Ahmad and Akbar, 2020; Hartmann *et al.*, 2017; Onyemah *et al.*, 2018). Various meta-analytical studies have studied the antecedents of sales performance. In particular, Walker *et al.*, (1977) established the first unifying model, followed by a summary of sales performance from Churchill *et al.*, (1985), covering the period between 1918 and 1982. In the same vein, Verbeke *et al.*, (2011) continued their work 25 years later considering the period 1982–2008. In fact, the dependence of firms in business-to-business (B2B) contexts on their salespeople's sales performance is substantial (Høgevoid *et al.*, 2021). If the employees sales performance is exceptional, it is likely to improve the firm's overall performance.

In particular, salespeople in B2B work contexts within services are considered a fundamental asset and strength in achieving firms' financial goals (Darrat *et al.*, 2017; Fatima and Azam, 2017; Hartmann *et al.*, 2017). Considering the perspective of B2B services firms, the pivotal role of salespeople in their business success is beyond doubt (Kwak *et al.*, 2019; Ulaga and Kohli, 2018), as they constitute the link between the firm and both actual and future clients (Futrell, 2006).

In addition, and building on psychological and organizational behavior principles, the issue of job satisfaction proves to be a common construct when studying sellers' sales performance given the relevance of individual feelings within work (Kian *et al.*, 2014; Rafferty and Griffin, 2009). Indeed, under such vision, the role performed by B2B sellers reveals the relevance of taking into consideration in the same study, these two key related research issues, namely: (i) salesforce performance, and (ii) salesforce job satisfaction (Rodríguez *et al.*, 2022; Singh and Das, 2013) as well as their underlying sequential logic (Bakotic, 2016; Palmatier *et al.*, 2006).

In fact, understanding this pathway is particularly relevant in the service sector considering the salesforce working conditions and talent retention problems (Stamolampros *et al.*, 2019). Yet, although the industrial and organizational psychology literature has acknowledged a relationship between the sellers' performance and their job satisfaction (Christen *et al.*, 2006; Imiru, 2018; Rafferty and Griffin, 2009), there is no consensus on its causality (Rajabi *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, the literature on sales psychology has continuously recognized that further research on this issue is required (Rajabi *et al.*, 2021).

Within this background, literature on sales has given a great deal of consideration to understanding the connection between salesperson performance and his/her job satisfaction (Kwak *et al.*, 2019; Singh and Das, 2013), but claims have been made that the reason behind the mixed research results could be the nature of the measurement of these two related variables. In particular, when measuring such variables, the sales literature indicates that a dual approach to each construct should be applied (Høgevoid *et al.*, 2020; Nasrin Razi *et al.*, 2022; Rodríguez *et al.*, 2022). That is, evaluating salespeople's performance should consider an objective dimension referring to such aspects as the achievement of sales quota or market

results (Høgevold *et al.*, 2023; Limbu *et al.*, 2016; Singh and Das, 2013). However, it should also include a subjective dimension, in the form of supervisor or salespeople's perceptions of (sales) performance compared to that of others (Fehrenbacher *et al.*, 2018; Zallocco *et al.*, 2009).

Equally, salespeople's job satisfaction should be measured taking into account both the individual appraisal of his or her economic outcomes (e.g. sales achievements) known as economic satisfaction (Palmatier, 2008; Sanzo *et al.*, 2003), as well as affective or relational issues (e.g. emotions), generally referred to as non-economic or social satisfaction (Geyskens *et al.*, 1999; Palmatier, 2008). In helping to overcome the absence of research unanimity regarding the performance-satisfaction relation of sellers in the workplace, Rodríguez *et al.*'s (2022) recent work provides a path setting satisfaction as a function of salesforce performance. Moreover, other studies have indicated that the salesforce satisfaction refers to the individual seller's assessment regarding his job performance (Kwak *et al.*, 2019). The present study supports this positioning of satisfaction as an outcome of performance, but also considers the dualities of both constructs. In particular, based on previous reasoning, we position these dualities in a sequential model, where the objective and impartial performance permits the assessment of the subjective appraisal (Limbu *et al.*, 2016; Zallocco *et al.*, 2009), which somehow echoes the concerns of unbiased magnitudes (Rich *et al.*, 1999).

Furthermore, satisfaction in B2B relationships implies both financial and social assessments of this interaction (Geyskens and Steenkamp, 2000). In particular, and according to earlier works (Mpinganjira *et al.*, 2017; Rodríguez *et al.*, 2006; Rutherford, 2012), we position economic satisfaction as an antecedent of non-economic satisfaction, since business activities rely, at first, on economic issues and, over time, they evolve into business relations (Nyaga *et al.*, 2010; Rodríguez *et al.*, 2006).

However, Magreta (2002) recognizes that business models are dependent on the type of corporate offering in the market. In fact, selling products is different from selling services (Biemans and Griffin, 2018; Lin *et al.*, 2018; Rodríguez *et al.*, 2024) and selling services is more dependent on people (Zubair *et al.*, 2023) and, thus, within this B2B area of research, there is an increasing interest in considering the B2B services workplace setting, due to its complexity, uncertainty and network interdependence (Høgevold *et al.*, 2024; Laplaca, 2013; Molinari *et al.*, 2008; Vickery *et al.*, 2004) as well as the fact that many firms are shifting from being largely product-oriented to becoming more and more services-oriented in B2B markets (Jacob and Ulaga, 2008). In fact, the authors of the sequential logic model call for new studies "... to verify whether the sequential logic model also applies to service-oriented companies" (Rodríguez *et al.*, 2022, p. 191).

Also, considering the uniqueness of the B2B sales profession (Elhajjar *et al.*, 2024) and given the complex work conditions of the service sector derived from issues such as direct interaction, time pressure or workload (Yang *et al.*, 2024), analyzing employees work satisfaction in B2B service firms is a significant research gap considering its applicability for sales management. Moreover, as Wirtz and Kowalkowski (2023, p. 273) recently claimed "there is a need to further develop general theory on B2B services which is not limited to manufacturing settings".

Hence, the goal of this study is to verify the sequential logic between the dualities of salespeople's objective and subjective performance, and their economic and non-economic job

satisfaction. This research applies the sequential logic suggested by Rodriguez *et al.* (2022), and extends it by considering the applicability to B2B work settings of services firms. We therefore examine the connection between seller job's performance and his/her satisfaction, by subdividing them into the dualities of objective and subjective sales performance, along with economic and non-economic job satisfaction.

The sequential model offered in this work contributes to burgeoning the organizational behavior and psychological streams on sales research as it helps in contextualizing the extent and structural characteristics of salesforce's sales performance and the satisfaction of their work considering the specific case of B2B services firms. It also sheds new light on the interrelationships between the notions of objective and subjective sales performance, along with those of economic and non-economic job satisfaction. Furthermore, this work considers the salespeople perspective, which has scarcely been studied previously in B2B research (Viio and Grönroos, 2014).

The remainder of the paper is structured in the following way: First, we present our theoretical framework, explaining the constructs and its dualities and presenting the proposed relationships and hypotheses. Secondly, we introduce the methodology and the sample, in addition to the empirical analysis. To end, we present the results, suggestions, and concluding thoughts, as well as future research proposals.

## 2. Theoretical framework and research hypothesis

The common logic in social psychology and organizational behavior is that competent salespeople create value for firms in B2B markets, as they study and understand customer needs, and may develop stable and long-term relationships with them (Aydin *et al.*, 2017). Applied to the service B2B setting, the relationships are affirmed to be even longer (Elhajjar *et al.*, 2024; Zubair *et al.*, 2023). Hence, retaining successful and competent salespeople in the services industries is considered an essential aspect of competitive advantage and business success (Bagozzi and Verbeke, 2020; Hartmann *et al.*, 2017; Rane, 2011).

Furthermore, the sales literature has indicated that salespeople's job satisfaction affects their retention one way or the other (Frey *et al.*, 2013). In such a scenario, sales managers initially need to focus on how to determine the outcome of the sellers' job satisfaction and then how to improve sales personnel job satisfaction as a way to enhance corporate performance. It can implicitly be assumed that satisfied salespeople will positively affect customer loyalty (Palmatier *et al.*, 2006) and, ultimately, overall corporate performance (Bakotić, 2016).

The psychosocial stream of sales literature considers the antecedents of job satisfaction as a significant issue to study (Bagozzi and Verbeke, 2020; Brown and Peterson, 1993; Dugguh and Dennis, 2014; Hartmann *et al.*, 2016), as this phenomenon is expected to affect several job-related aspects. This should be the case, as salespeople's involvement or commitment and, by extension, consumer satisfaction, competitive advantages and business productivity (Rajabi *et al.*, 2021; Rutherford *et al.*, 2019, Sarker and Ashrafi, 2018) will be enhanced. Firms seek to achieve and maintain satisfied salespeople (Thakur *et al.*, 2020) and, thus, understanding their antecedents is an extremely useful topic for research and practice (Imiru, 2018; Rutherford *et al.*, 2014) as it helps to create a more satisfied workforce (Dorta-Afonso *et al.*, 2023).

Accordingly, sales research has identified several causes of salespeople's satisfaction with their sales job. For this work, we highlight the relevance of the sales performance-



satisfaction path (Brown and Peterson, 1993, 1994). This is a relationship with historical interest in this domain of literature, whose causality has received inconsistent and debatable findings (Bakotić, 2016; Johnson and Jaramillo, 2017; Sohi, 1996), which reveals it remains an open research question (Rajabi *et al.*, 2021).

In fact, as suggested in the meta analytical work done by Jaramillo *et al.* (2005), a reason for the mixed results can emerge from the fact that no study, until the nomological work of Rodríguez *et al.* (2022), has considered the dualities of both constructs simultaneously. In doing so, we consider the relationship between these two relevant topics in B2B service sales settings by studying their relationship, also considering the dualities of both salespeople's performance and job satisfaction together in a research model.

### 2.1 Salespeople's Sales Performance

Sales performance refers to those outcomes and behaviors by salespeople (e.g. economic rewards and also acquiring new clients or skills and abilities) that contribute to achieving corporate goals and overall corporate performance (Fang *et al.*, 2005). Although the relevance of this issue to sales management is beyond doubt (Chawla *et al.*, 2020; Jaramillo *et al.*, 2005; Herjanto and Franklin, 2019), sales research is not yet unanimous on how it should be measured (Høgevold *et al.*, 2024; Limbu *et al.*, 2016).

On this matter, and considering the challenges associated with assessing this issue (Bolander *et al.*, 2021) together with the advances in digital technologies on the sales activity (Elhajjar *et al.*, 2024), recent literature affirms that more innovative methods to measure this construct should be applied, such as emerging technologies (Alsufyani and Gill, 2022; Legman, *et al.*, 2023). The proper way to do so is, thus, still on the sales research agenda (Bolander *et al.*, 2021; Limbu *et al.*, 2016; Nasrin Razi *et al.*, 2022; Zalloco *et al.*, 2009).

Explicitly, the psychosocial stream of sales literature agrees that when evaluating the individual performance of salespeople, self-appreciation relates to their own evaluation or estimation of their sales results and work in terms of organizational objectives (Jex, 2002; Sohi, 1996) and by comparing them with those of their peers in the firm (Chonko *et al.*, 2000). This vision reflects two separate dimensions of sales performance, namely objective and subjective, that need to be assessed separately, in order to appropriately measure them (Jaramillo *et al.*, 2005).

By contrast, objective performance implies a seller's evaluation and appreciation of his or her sales by comparing the results to those of other salespeople in the firm or with established outputs (e.g. a reference point of sales budget or market share) (Avlonitis and Panagopoulos, 2005; Bolander *et al.*, 2021; Fehrenbacher *et al.*, 2018). On the other hand, subjective performance relates to an assessment of salespeople's performance, as their own evaluation does not use any reference or comparison and merely reflects his or her own (subjective) appreciation (Lai-Bennejean and Beitelspacher, 2021).

In truth, both measures should therefore be considered when assessing sales performance, in order to accomplish a comprehensive evaluation, as they reveal diverse sides of this relevant sales issue (Bol and Smith, 2011; Chonko *et al.*, 2000; Fehrenbacher *et al.*, 2018; Høgevold *et al.*, 2024; Rich *et al.*, 1999).

### 2.2 Salespeople's Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is a very common construct in organizational behavior research studies under the view of psychological theories given the relevance of individual feelings within their work and performance (Rafferty and Griffin, 2009). Under this social psychological background sales force job satisfaction is considered as the subjective assessment that salespeople have of their job performance (Bagozzi and Verbeke, 2020; Locke, 1969; Weiss, 2002). That is, how do salespeople feel about their own job? (Kwak *et al.*, 2019).

This topic is of great relevance for sales managers, given its power “in explaining workplace behaviors” (Bezdrob and Sunje, 2021, p. 2) as well as the underlying significance of organizational culture in employee satisfaction (see for a review Akpa and Asikhia, 2021; Belias and Koustelios, 2014) and, the fact that satisfied staff members will truly improve business efficiency (Rajabi *et al.*, 2021). Unfortunately, research has failed to adequately measure this concept (Rutherford *et al.*, 2019).

On this point, when assessing job satisfaction, Hartmann *et al.* (2016, 2017) confirm that it is a multidimensional issue, but sales research only considers it partially, thus causing diverging effects (Nyaga *et al.*, 2010). Several studies in business contexts consider the need to separate and discriminate between economic and non-economic satisfaction when considering this issue (Geyskens *et al.*, 1999; Høgevold *et al.*, 2020; Palmatier, 2008; Rodríguez *et al.*, 2006), and introduce this duality when investigating the phenomenon in sales research (Geyskens and Steenkamp, 2000; Palmatier *et al.*, 2006).

Specifically, economic job satisfaction reflects and captures salespeople’s positive consideration of financially-related aspects such as the impact of “margins” or “sales” on salaries, whereas non-economic job satisfaction deals with salespeople’s personal and subjective appraisal of social sales-related facets such as emotions (Palmatier, 2008; Sanzo *et al.*, 2003). In consequence, economic job satisfaction reveals salespeople’s own view of the tangible aspects as opposed to non-economic job satisfaction, which entails those intangible or affective aspects of sales-related business relationships (Geyskens and Steenkamp, 2000; Rodríguez *et al.*, 2022).

Alternatively expressed, while assessing satisfaction in business research, this topic has to be considered as an overall issue that separately considers salespeople’s affective response to both the economic and the psychosocial aspects. Therefore, evaluating satisfaction should consider these two dimensions independently, and individually, as they represent different things (Geyskens and Steenkamp, 2000; Høgevold *et al.*, 2020; Nyaga *et al.*, 2010; Palmatier *et al.*, 2006; Payan *et al.*, 2018).

### 2.3 Research model and hypothesis

The matter of sellers’ sales performance as an antecedent of their job satisfaction conforms to the postulates of psychological theories, in the sense that firms reward those salespeople more, who have a high level of sales performance. They are thereby more satisfied and thus motivated and involved with the firm (Brown and Peterson, 1993, 1994; Carrillat and Locander, 2005; Imiru, 2018; Kwak *et al.*, 2019; Rajabi *et al.* 2021).

Particularly, in the context of performance literature has identified and clarified two ways of assessing sales performance, namely objective and subjective (Jaramillo *et al.*, 2005). Especially because objective and subjective performance reflect different aspects of the topic, they can impact each other (Bol and Smith, 2011), so that we position subjective sales

performance nomologically after objective performance, as salespeople’s subjective appraisal reflects his or her personal consideration of their economic contribution and goal achievements (Rich *et al.*, 1999; Rodríguez *et al.*, 2022; Zalloco *et al.*, 2009).

Equally, regarding satisfaction, research has recognized the duality of economic and non-economic satisfaction (Geyskens *et al.*, 1999; Høgevold *et al.*, 2020) and confirmed that both measures of satisfaction are interconnected (Geyskens and Steenkamp, 2000; Rodriguez *et al.*, 2022). As suggested by Rodríguez *et al.* (2006), economic job satisfaction influences non-economic job satisfaction. If salespeople are economically satisfied with their jobs, they have probably performed their tasks well and feel recognized and valued in the firm. Accordingly, they will exhibit positive feelings and beneficial attitudes, in turn improving relationships and social interaction and achieving a positive emotional state (Celik, 2011; Churchill *et al.*, 1992; Hartman *et al.*, 2016).

Therefore, we state our research hypotheses:

- H<sub>1</sub>: The *objective* sales performance of sellers is positively associated with their subjective sales performance.
- H<sub>2</sub>: The *subjective* sales performance of sellers is positively associated with their economic job satisfaction.
- H<sub>3</sub>: The *economic* job satisfaction of sellers is positively associated with their non-economic job satisfaction.

Accordingly, the sequential logic of the dualities is an integrative framework that considers the duality of both salespeople’s performance (objective and subjective) and the sellers’ job satisfaction (economic and non-economic) in one research model, so as to provide a superior clarification of the connection between sales performance and job satisfaction in a B2B scenario. In fact, the model offered in this work (see Figure 1) illustrates the sequential logic of the dualities of sales performance and job satisfaction adapted from Rodríguez *et al.* (2022) and provides a performance satisfaction path, on the implicit assumption that satisfied salespeople are those that have performed well and thus position job satisfaction as a function of their sales performance.

The sequential logic of these dualities places objective before subjective performance, in order to reflect that objective evaluation being considered when making the subjective evaluation (H<sub>1</sub>). Salespeople’s job satisfaction is also seen as dependent on seller performance (H<sub>2</sub>). Economic job satisfaction is positively related with non-economic job satisfaction, as social satisfaction emerges once the seller previously recognizes that the tasks are performed correctly and assesses economic job satisfaction (H<sub>3</sub>).

Insert Figure 1 about here.

**Figure 1: A Sequential Logic Model – Sales Performance and Sales Agent Satisfaction.**

The sequential logic of the dualities among the different constructs of the model are shown in Figure 1 and relies on earlier works proposing and showing a positive causality



concerning seller's performance and satisfaction (Brown and Peterson, 1994; Dugguh and Dennis, 2014; Imiru, 2018; Walker *et al.*, 1977). This is associated with concerns in the sales management literature regarding: (i) weak evidence and mixed results on this performance-satisfaction connection (Bakotić, 2016; Singh and Das, 2013; Shu *et al.*, 2018; Rajabi *et al.*, 2021), and (ii) the necessity to reconsider the measurement of both constructs in research (Christen, *et al.*, 2006) in the sense that the literature has acknowledged different ways of assessing the same topic, which in reality, embody different aspects.

### 3. Method

The methodology used in this research is survey-based, using a questionnaire and a deductive approach. The sample consists of 732 multi-sized firms of various sizes located in Norway. All firms belong to different industries within the service-oriented business sector (see Table 3) were identified according to the Standard Industrial Classification (2007). Key informants of such firms (vendors, team leaders, or sales, key account or regional managers) received a questionnaire with an overview of the study and a cover letter explaining its goals, in addition to providing the researchers' contact details.

These key targeted informants were selected according to two criteria. First, they had to have some kind of budget responsibilities; and, second, they also had to be active sellers and not only supervise in selling. After sending them the initial email and during a period of three weeks, phone calls and email reminders were also used to encourage the key informants to participate. In all, 389 surveys were obtained back (response rate 53.1%).

The constructs and items included in the questionnaire measured on a Likert 1 to 5 Likert scale have been adapted to B2B sales relationships by Rodríguez *et al.* (2022) as offered in Table 1. In addition, the questionnaire included two final screening questions to validate key informants' capability. In particular, and in line with Campbell's suggestions (1955) regarding competence in the subject matter considered in the study, we asked them for the overall number of years (1) of sales experience and (2) in the company, in our case B2B sales performance drivers. These questions revealed that key informants have, on average, 20.4 years of experience in sales (median of 17.0 years) and 9.9 years in the present firm (median of 7.0 years).

Insert Table 1 about here.

**Table 1: Constructs and Items.**

The data obtained were analyzed using univariate and multivariate statistical techniques, as explained in the next section. In short, the different skill-level indicator dimensions display minimal internal non-response bias (Table 2), also displaying mean values and standard deviations. The univariate statistics demonstrate consistent and of high-quality responses of key informants (Table 3).

Insert Table 2 about here.

**Table 2: Sample Characteristics and Context.**

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**4. Empirical findings**

A series of univariate and multivariate analyses and statistics are described in this section. First, the univariate and multivariate statistics per item and construct (Table 3) and then, the measurement characteristics of the model based on confirmatory factor analysis. The structural properties of the research model are also reported, also using structural equation modelling. Several estimates of validity and reliability are reported additionally. Finally, the outcomes of several rival models are reported and compared to the outcome of the model considered in this research.

The confirmatory factor analysis, the structural equation modelling and the rival models consist of four constructs containing three items each. The conceptual model concerning the dualities of both sales performance and job satisfaction, contains twelve items (see Figure 2). The IBM SPSS AMOS 27.0 software was used in the statistical analyses.

Insert Figure 2 about here.

**Figure 2: Sequential Logic Model – Constructs and Items.**

Table 3 reports acceptable univariate and multivariate statistical values per item and construct in the following way: (i) mean values; (ii) standard deviations; (ii) explained variance; and (iv) factor loadings.

Insert Table 3 about here.

**Table 3: Univariate and Multivariate Statistics.**

*4.1 Research Model: Measurement, Reliability and Validity*

Confirmatory factor analysis shows acceptable goodness of fit measures for the proposed research model, as all measurements meet the proposed thresholds by Hair *et al.* (2006). In particular, the Chi-square yields 96.886 (48 degrees of freedom; sig.  $p = 0.000$ ) using a useable corporate sample of 389 services firms.

The measurement model yields highly acceptable fit statistics within the proposed thresholds: Normed Chi-square ( $X^2/df$ ) is 1.900 (51 degrees of freedom), NFI is 0.970, RFI is 0.953, IFI is 0.985, TLI is 0.977, CFI is 0.985, and RMSEA is 0.046 (confidence interval 90%: 0.028-0.059). Consequently, we proceed to test it as presented in Figure 2.

The goodness of fit for the constructs also yields acceptable estimates: chi-square yields 83.703 (48 degrees of freedom, sig.  $p = 0.001$ ), normed Chi-square ( $X^2/df$ ) is 1.744. NFI is 0.974, RFI is 0.957, IFI is 0.989, TLI is 0.981, CFI is 0.998 and RMSEA is 0.044 (confidence interval 90%: 0.028-0.059) offering a clearly acceptable structural model.

Table 4 demonstrates all hypothesized relationships are significant ( $p = 0.000$ ), with standardized regression weights between 0.298-0.678,

Insert Table 4 about here.

**Table 4. Regression Statistics and the Outcome of Hypotheses**

Table 5 displays construct validity and reliability. The measurement of convergent validity considers the variance extracted from each construct and denotes the degree that the construct items share variance among each other (Hair *et al.*, 2006).

To verify that there is no common method bias, and eliminate unsatisfactory validity, we follow Podsakoff *et al.*'s (2012) guiding principles about the measurement of the variables and statistical solutions. Several measures were undertaken. For example, knowledgeable salespeople who are professionally engaged in sales performance and interested to participate in the research were approached. Each was carefully selected so as to be relevant to this study, and the questionnaire was well explained so that it was easy and quick to fill in, thereby reducing the time the salespeople required.

Also, we applied the Harman single factor test in search of common method bias showing that it is unlikely to be present as when reducing the number of factors to one, the explained variance is 43.8% with explained variance per construct of 23.0%, 21.6%, 19.3% and 17.4%, and a total explained variance of 81.2%.

Table 5 shows that the constructs' variance extracted in the research model meets the proposed thresholds of 50% (range 58.3% to 83.0%) and the reliability of each construct. The composite trait reliability meets the 0.7 threshold indicated by Hair *et al.* (2006) with estimates oscillating between 0.85-0.93. Again, considering Hair *et al.*'s (2006) recommendations, the variance extracted is higher than the squared inter-construct correlations for each construct (see Table 5) which confirms discriminant validity; also, nomological validity provides support for the path of the proposed relationships in the research model, which is in line with previous studies.

Table 5 displays construct validity and reliability. The measurement of convergent validity considers the variance extracted from each construct and denotes the degree to which the construct items share variance among each other (Hair *et al.*, 2006).

Insert Table 5 about here.

**Table 5: Squared Inter-Construct Correlations and Summary Statistics.**

Consequently, the measurement and structural properties of the research model in Norway confirm both reliability and validity. Based on this, the empirical findings reported previously reveal several rival models, all of which are described and reported in the next section.

#### 4.2 Rival Models

Rival model 1 amends a non-significant hypothesized association between objective sales performance and non-economic job satisfaction ( $p\text{-value}=0.120$ ; regression coefficient=0.100). The rest of the relationships postulated in the model remain significant.

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Rival model 2 amends a weakly significant hypothesized connection between objective sales performance and economic job satisfaction (p-value=0.036; regression coefficient=-0.165) whereas the rest of the relationships hypothesized remain significant.

Rival model 3 amends a non-significant hypothesized relationship between subjective sales performance and non-economic job satisfaction (p-value=0.069; regression coefficient=0.138) with the rest of the posited relationships remaining significant.

Finally, Rival model 4 amends the hypothesized relationships in Rival models 1 to 3, all of which are not at all or only weakly significant: (i) subjective sales performance and non-economic job satisfaction (p-value=0.162; regression coefficient= -0.115); (ii) objective sales performance and non-economic job satisfaction (p-value=0.509; regression coefficient=0.061); and (iii) objective sales performance and economic job satisfaction (p-value=0.035; regression coefficient=-0.165). The original relationships proposed in the model remain significant.

Table 6 reports parsimony adjusted measures by comparing conceptual with rival models 1-4. The research model shows consistently higher measures of PRATIO, PNFI and PCFI in comparison to the rival models.

Insert Table 6 about here.

**Table 6: Conceptual Model versus Rival Models - Parsimony-Adjusted Measures.**

Consequently, the empirical findings show that the proposed research model is more robust than any of the rival ones. This confirms the sequential logic model concerning the dualities of the two aspects of sales performance and those of job satisfaction in a sample of B2B services firms in Norway.

**5. Discussion and research implications**

The present research contributes to unlocking the black box of mechanisms or the sales performance-job satisfaction pathway within the psychosocial stream of sales research. Particularly, this work clarifies the interrelationships among both objective and subjective sales performance with the dyad of economic and non-economic job satisfaction considering the B2B services firms setting. It also supports the findings of Rodríguez *et al.* (2022) on the sequential logic of such constructs.

Indeed, empirical findings confirm that salespeople’s objective sales performance is positively connected with their subjective sales performance on one side and, also, that the economic job satisfaction of the sellers is positively related to their non-economic job satisfaction. Importantly, while sellers’ objective sales performance is not connected to their economic or non-economic job satisfaction, their subjective sales performance does form a bridge to their economic job satisfaction.

Certainly and considering the severe working conditions and talent retention problems in the service sector (Stamolampros *et al.*, 2019), the sequential logic offered in this work is important, and particularly useful for human resource specialists service related industries to create a more satisfied workforce.

Specifically, this research highlights to the fact that objective sales performance and economic job satisfaction do not relate directly to each other, but rely on salespeople’s

perceptions of their subjective sales performance. Likewise, subjective sales performance and non-economic job performance also do not relate directly to each other, but rely on salespeople's perceptions of their economic job satisfaction.

This study therefore confirms that the interrelationships between the constructs of the research model can be reduced to three relationships, while the other three do not demonstrate a strong effect. This study provides an enhanced understanding of the dualities between the issues of salespeople's sales performance, and their job satisfaction. It also provides a better understanding of the precursors of satisfaction which is highly relevant, given the effect of job satisfaction on business productivity. The results enable firms working on the antecedents of job satisfaction to improve salespeople's satisfaction and ultimately also business performance.

We contend that the sequential logic reported in this study contributes to a nomological framework of the dualities of salespeople's (objective and subjective) sales performance, and their (economic and non-economic) job satisfaction. The results reported indicate that three out of six possible relationships between the studied constructs are less likely to be important (i.e. non-significant). It enables sales directors and team leaders of salespeople to focus on fewer causalities to make salespeople perform and be satisfied in B2B sales.

Consequently, the sequential logic model stresses a set of core relationships between the constructs, all of which simplifies the assessment of what is the cause-and-effect relationships between them. In other words, the sequential logic model contributes making the reality less complex by indicating how to access and understand salespeople's sales performance, and their job satisfaction. In previous studies, the results suggest that sales performance, and job satisfaction are important to recruit and maintain salespeople in B2B setting (Rodríguez *et al.*, 2022; Stamolampros *et al.*, 2019). It leads to continuity and a foundation to develop salespeople's skills to succeed in B2B sales.

## 6. Managerial implications

The research model described and verified in this work offers relevant and valuable guidance for sales managers wishing to comprehend the link between the performance and satisfaction of salespeople in service firms' B2B sales relationships. Salespeople in service firms performing well objectively, may still not be sufficient to make them feel economically satisfied with their sales performance. Economic job satisfaction relies on salespeople's self-perceptions of their sales performance.

Service organizations can therefore take advantage of the understanding of this duality to achieve happy and productive employees. Managers in service organizations need to realize the relevant impact of salesforce self-perceptions on their own job to enhance their effectiveness. Indeed, leaders have to consider that performing well may not automatically equate to satisfied workers and psychological issues have to also be considered. Thus, to better understand the sales job satisfaction of their employees, managers of service firms need to look into the subjective and psychological reasons why their sellers do not feel completely satisfied with their job performance.

Consequently, salespeople may have performed well, but if they do not also perceive that they have performed well, they may not be economically satisfied. It is therefore critical for sales executives to make salespeople aware of their actual objective (unbiased) sales performance, so their subjective (biased) sales performance can match this level. Ultimately, it



is the combination of salespeople's objective and subjective sales performance which provides the foundation for economic job satisfaction. It is also the combination of salespeople's economic and non-economic job satisfaction that ultimately provides a foundation for overall job satisfaction in the B2B sales relationships of service firms.

Certainly, this study is particularly useful for leaders and human resource specialists in service businesses as it might help managers to increase the satisfaction of their workforce given the difficult particularities of the salesforce job in this type of industries by understanding which exact issues make their employees happy and work harder.

A lesson learned from the research model is that there is a cause - effect rationality between the issues of sales performance and job satisfaction, as the former is a precursor, and the latter is an outcome. Another lesson is that objective sales performance is also a precursor, while subjective sales performance is an outcome. The same sequential logic applies to economic job satisfaction being a precursor, while non-economic job satisfaction is an outcome.

We argue that the sequential logic concerning these four constructs provides guidance to sales managers, and also constitutes an important aspect of understanding in B2B sales relationships in service firms. This all helps in those processes of motivation and retention of sales staff that are so important for service firms in B2B markets. Satisfied salespeople are likely stay in the firm, work harder and perform better. Job satisfaction may improve relationships with customers along the chain (i.e. loyalty and trust) and may enhance business performance. Finally, job satisfaction generates competitive advantages and productivity that may enhance business performance.

## 7. Conclusions, research limitations and future research proposals

The results emerging from this work verify the sequential logic between the dualities of salespeople's objective and subjective sales performance, along with their economic and non-economic job satisfaction. We conclude that the research model offers valid and reliable insights into the structural properties and dualities between the four constructs considered.

This study contributes to contextualizing the measurement and the structural characteristics of sellers' performance and job satisfaction for service firms' B2B sales relationships. It also sheds light on the interrelationships (i.e. the sequential logic) between these four related aspects.

Nevertheless, this study and its reported findings inevitably have some theoretical, methodological and empirical limitations, which then also provide opportunities for further research. Theoretically, this work suffers from the application of one measurement scale per construct, while additional ones could have provided an extended and deepened understanding of job sales performance and satisfaction for the case of service firms' B2B relationships.

Methodologically, this study is limited to B2B service firm sales relationships, while other corporate samples could usefully be examined. Empirically, this study focuses on the service sector of corporate Norway, so that corporate sectors of other countries offer opportunities for further research. Another research limitation of this study is the use of single scales for each construct (i.e. subjective and objective performance; economic and non-economic satisfaction) rather than multiple scales for each construct as each construct may possess a complex structure at a detailed level.

The aggregated level applied in this study to measure each construct restricts the depth and dimensionality of those constructs. Further research may address this shortcoming and verify the validity and reliability of the results reported in this study. A final suggestion is to apply other multi-item measures of constructs to further verify the sequential logic of the dualities of the sellers' sales performance and their job satisfaction.

A final suggestion is to apply other multi-item measures of constructs to further verify the sequential logic of the dualities of the sellers' sales performance and their job satisfaction. In addition, and since job satisfaction and sales performance are complex variables that can be influenced by situational factors, applying and comparing the model in different settings could be interesting and enhance the contribution of the offered pathway. For instance, comparing the sequential logic in emerging markets with established markets within the service sector. Also, an additional contribution to the psychological foundation of sales research could be to explore the individual characteristics of the salesforce and, perhaps, comparisons of the hypothesized relationships can be made between gender groups.

Finally, understanding if job sales perceptions, and thereby the proposed model, change by considering internal business issues would truly enhance the relevance of the offered model from the view of the organizational behavior theorists. In doing so, less commonly studied factors within this area of research could be considered in future research such as organizational culture, technological adoption, or market dynamics. Including these elements could enhance the model's relevance and provide additional avenues for discussion, especially in understanding how modern organizational dynamics might influence the observed dualities in performance and satisfaction.

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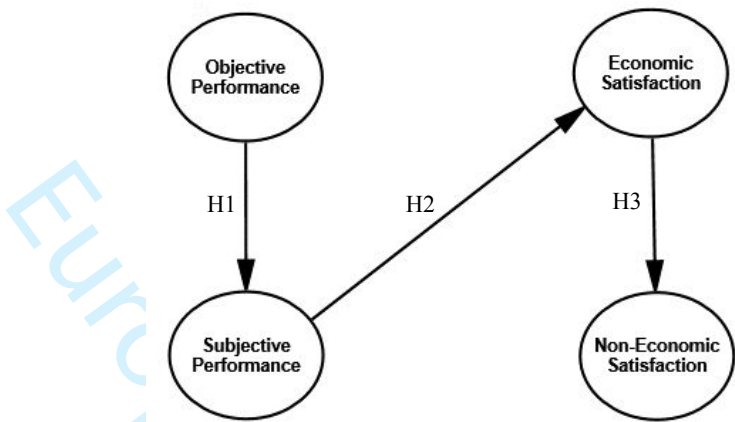


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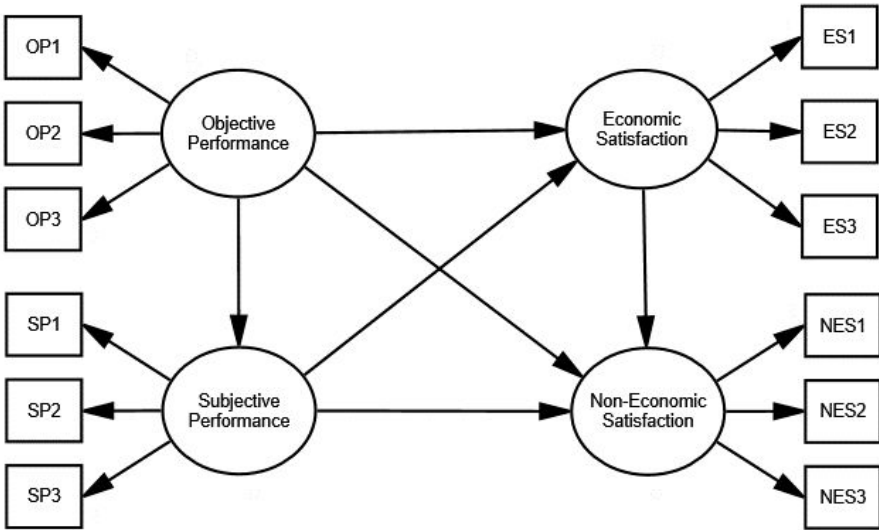
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**Figure 1.** A Sequential Logic Model – Sales Performance and Sales Agent Satisfaction.



Source: Authors own work

**Figure 2.** Sequential Logic Model – Constructs and Items.



Source: Authors own work

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Table 1. Constructs and Items

Construct	Source	Meaning	Items
Objective Sales Performance:	Sohi (1996)	The objectives of the sellers salespeople are assessed according to their impact on business goals.	Please indicate your performance in the last 12 months: a) My sales budget is above the average of my company's salesforce. b) My sales margin is above the average of my company's salesforce. c) My market share is above the average of my company's salesforce.
Subjective Sales Performance.	Sujan,Weitz and Kumar (1994)	Sellers self-evaluation compared to their mates as regards to the undertake of the expected quality and quantity of sales objectives.	a) I generate a high level of sales. b) I exceed sales targets. c) I assist my sales supervisor to achieve his or her goals.
Economic Sales Satisfaction	Sanzo, Santos, Vázquez and Álvarez (2003)	The positive affective state resulting from the appraisal of economic benefits (e.g margins and sales volume).	a) I ensure my company's profitability. b) I contribute to my company's sales goals. c) I contribute to my company's financial performance.
Non-Economic Sales Satisfaction	Geyskens, Steenkamp and Kumar (1999)	The positive affective state resulting from the appraisal of social aspects of one organization working together with another	a) I am comfortable about the relationship with my company. b) The relationship with my company is positive. c) The relationship with my company is satisfying.

Source: Adapted from Rodríguez *et al.* (2022)

Table 2. Sample Characteristics and Context

Sample	Count	Full-Time Employee Equivalent	Count	Annual Turnover (Euro)	Count
Wholesale and retail trade	63	1 – 9	11	0 – 9.9 Millions	19
Transport and storage	39	10 – 19	10	10.0 – 49.9 Millions	31
Accommodation and food service	20	20 – 49	12	50.0 – 99.9 Millions	38
Information and communication	47	50 – 99	21	100 – 249 Millions	126
Financial and insurance	103	100 – 249	77	250+ Millions	175
Real estate	2	250 – 999	96	Total	389
Professional, scientific and technical activities	54	1000+	162		
Administrative and support service	45	Total	389		
Other services	16				
Total	389				

Source: Authors own work

Table 3. Univariate and Multivariate Statistics

Construct and Items	N	Mean		Standard Deviation		Variance Explained		Factor Loading	
		Item	Mean	Item	Mean	Item	Mean	Item	Mean
Objective Sales Performance									
a)	387	3.47	3.46	1.01	0.95	0.53	0.58	0.73	0.76
b)	387	3.45		0.92		0.56		0.75	
c)	387	3.45		0.93		0.66		0.81	
Subjective Sales Performance									
a)	389	3.93	3.90	0.90	0.91	0.67	0.62	0.82	0.78
b)	387	3.65		0.98		0.69		0.83	
c)	389	4.11		0.84		0.49		0.70	
Economic Job Satisfaction									
a)	386	4.58	4.55	0.58	0.61	0.76	0.83	0.87	0.91
b)	387	4.56		0.59		0.89		0.94	
c)	387	4.51		0.65		0.84		0.91	
Non-Economic Job Satisfaction									
a)	388	4.23	4.23	0.76	0.76	0.87	0.80	0.93	0.89
b)	389	4.29		0.71		0.88		0.94	
c)	389	4.17		0.81		0.64		0.80	

Source: Authors own work

**Table 4.** Regression Statistics and the Outcome of Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Exogenous Construct	Endogenous Construct	Regression Weight	Significance	Finding
1	Objective Performance	Subjective Performance	0.678	0.000	Supported
2	Subjective Performance	Economic Job Satisfaction	0.675	0.000	Supported
3	Economic Satisfaction	Non-Economic Job Satisfaction	0.298	0.000	Supported

Source: Authors own work

**Table 5.** Squared Inter-Construct Correlations and Summary Statistics

Construct	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Objective Performance	1.000			
2. Subjective Performance	0.48	1.000		
3. Economic Job Satisfaction	0.15	0.47	1.000	
4. Non-Economic Job Satisfaction	0.03	0.11	0.02	1.000
Variance Explained	58.3%	61.7%	83.0%	79.9%
Composite Trait Reliability	0.85	0.85	0.91	0.93

Source: Authors own work

**Table 6.** Conceptual Model versus Rival Models - Parsimony-Adjusted Measures

Model	PRATIO	PNFI	PCFI
Research Model	0.654	0.634	0.644
Rival Model 1	0.641	0.622	0.632
Rival Model 2	0.641	0.622	0.632
Rival Model 3	0.641	0.623	0.633
Rival Model 4	0.615	0.599	0.608

Source: Authors own work