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Why Sales Managers Matter: How Supervisory Coaching Affects Salespeople's Job Performance

Emory Serviss
University of South Alabama, ers1921@jagmail.southalabama.edu

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**WHY SALES MANAGERS MATTER: HOW SUPERVISORY COACHING
AFFECTS SALESPEOPLE'S JOB PERFORMANCE**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of South Alabama
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Business Administration, Marketing

by
Emory R. Serviss
MBA, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 1996
BS, Jacksonville State University, 1995
May 2022

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Lil, who has been a source of strength, support, patience, and love throughout my entire doctoral program. I am truly blessed to have you as my partner in this game called life.

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, who taught me to work hard for the things that I aspire to achieve, and to my beloved kids, Josie and Jimbo, who were my biggest cheerleaders.

I dedicate this work to all my friends who encouraged and supported me when the going got tough and I give special thanks to Tiger, our calico house cat, for being my study buddy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AVE   Average Variances Extracted

B2B   Business-to-Business

BCa   Bias-Corrected and Accelerated

CCA   Confirmatory Composite Analysis

CMB   Common Method Bias

DV   Dependent Variable

ESC   Effective Sales Coaching

F2F   Face-to-Face

HTMT   Heterotrait-Monotrait

ICT   Information and Communication Technologies

IV   Independent Variable

LM   Linear Regression Model

MNT   Media Naturalness Theory

PLS-SEM   Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modeling

RMSE   Root-Mean-Square Error

SDT   Self-Determination Theory

ABSTRACT

Serviss, Emory R., Ph.D., University of South Alabama, May 2022. Why Sales Managers Matter: How Supervisory Coaching Affects Salespeople's Job Performance. Chair of Committee: Matt C. Howard, Ph.D.

Today's business environment is very competitive, forcing companies to make additional efforts to develop and keep sustainable advantages. Thus, research aimed at finding ways to increase company performance has become critical. One specific managerial tool, sales coaching, has been hailed by academics and practitioners alike as vital to improving a salesperson's job performance. With a company's survival dependent on the success of their salespeople, research on sales coaching is crucial. The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the relationship between sales coaching and a salesperson's work-related attitudes and behaviors. Using self-determination theory, this research examines how a quality coaching relationship with one's sales manager influences a salesperson's sale creativity and job performance. This research uses partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) to investigate the direct, mediated, and moderated relationships among the variables studied using data from 332-salespeople working in the United States. Results suggest that a quality coaching experience does positively influence a salesperson's sales creativity and job performance. Theoretical and managerial implications as well as directions for future research are provided.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Companies face an increasingly challenging business environment because of economic globalization and technological advances. Today's corporate climate is very competitive, forcing companies to make additional efforts to develop and keep sustainable advantages. Continued success is increasingly linked to the growth, development, and retention of employees (Fulmer & Ployhart, 2014; Narayanan et al., 2019), and direct supervisors frequently play essential roles in the selection, assessment, education, and retention of their team members (Townsend & Hutchinson, 2017). In particular, they are expected to develop their subordinates to meet the organization's ever-changing needs and facilitate their learning. Increasingly, companies are realizing the vital role coaching plays in individual, team, and organizational effectiveness (Edinger, 2015).

The performance of a company's sales team is among the most critical determinants of continued success (Dahling et al., 2016). Without proper direction, salespeople can face uncertainty regarding the types of value-added activities they should employ during the selling process (Ogilvie et al., 2018). Salespeople reach their full potential through practical training and supervision activities that involve continuous guidance and feedback by their direct manager (Hawes & Rich, 1998). Sales managers

are the critical link between the vision of upper management and the company's frontline

revenue-generating sales force. The sales manager plays an integral part in helping the

company achieve its customer relationship, sales volume, and profit goals and objectives

by influencing its salespeople to execute appropriate selling behaviors consistently. Sales

coaching has become one of the top skills among effective sales managers in the

development and performance enhancement of salespeople. Given this direct influence

on a company's revenue-generating activities, there is a need to understand the current

role and positioning of sales coaching better.

The term "coaching" is often used interchangeably with training, counseling, and

mentoring, but though these activities have similarities, they are very different in terms of

application and the ultimate intention (Bluckert, 2005). Training is a planned and

systematic process that promotes attaining and mastering relevant skills and expertise

through instruction and demonstration (Losch et al., 2016). Essentially, training is about

narrowing the gap between an employee's existing skills and the required skills to

accomplish a particular task or assignment. Counseling generally addresses an

employee's emotional concerns, and it involves short-term interventions designed to

improve their sense of well-being, alleviate feelings of distress, and resolve personal

crises and problems (American Psychological Association, 2008). The goal of counseling

is to promote self-understanding and self-acceptance. Mentoring typically describes a

longer-term career development method whereby less experienced employees are

matched with more experienced colleagues, either through formal or informal programs,

for career-focused guidance (Emerson & Loehr, 2008). Mentoring has a broader focus

than coaching and is less focused on performance and specific tasks.

In contrast, coaching is a process of developing people to achieve new heights of excellence and performance by helping them master abilities and discern hidden issues that impede performance (Hawes & Rich, 1998). Coaching is a complex and multidimensional activity consisting of three constructs: supervisory feedback, role modeling, and trust in one's manager (Hawes & Rich, 1998). It can be studied at different levels of analysis, such as individual, dyadic, and team. Most importantly, coaching is a collaborative relationship where the manager and employee participate in a systematic process of setting goals and developing solutions to overcome obstacles to goal attainment. Getting sales coaching right starts with the understanding that it is not the same as other popular forms of coaching such as athletics and executive coaching. While it draws from practices from other coaching disciplines, sales coaching has its own characteristics and rhythm that position it as a distinct field. Sales coaching is best defined as:

> An action-oriented process of equipping salespeople, sales managers, and senior sales executives with appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities that will contribute toward cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development and enable them to achieve sales task-related and organization-related goals and objectives in an effective manner. (Badrinarayanan et al., 2015, p. 1092)

For example, a sales manager needs to spend time coaching each team member versus cutting them off and jumping into the sales process if the deal is in danger of not closing (Singh et al., 2015).

Having the ability to coach effectively is one of the most important characteristics that sales managers must have, because sales coaching directly impacts a salesperson's

belief that they have the necessary skills to do their job well (Deeter-Schmelz et al.,

2008). Sales managers invest in coaching to raise salesperson performance and encourage

team members to positively impact the company's bottom-line (Thomas, 2020). When

done well, sales coaching produces excellent results consistently. According to the RAIN

Group, the average company that invests in coaching sees a return of 700% (Schultz,

n.d.). The sales coaching process needs to be designed so every salesperson is supported

and equipped to effectively reach their personal quota as well as the team's quota and

goals. Coaching must also be flexible and repetitive to ensure lasting behavioral change

(Drake-Knight, 2012).

Self-determination theory (SDT) has been studied in the managerial coaching

literature for many years to explain employee motivation and what propels an individual

to act. SDT is an empirically based theory of human motivation, development, and

wellness that focuses on types of motivation as predictors of performance, relational, and

well-being outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2008). A crucial part of the coaching process is the

coaching relationship, and practitioners have stated that coaching allows them to develop

high-quality relationships with their salespeople based on trust, empathy, and compassion

(Halim, 2018). These variables are at the heart of SDT, and they help explain outcomes

of superior coaching relationships built on autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

Much of the research on managerial coaching to date has focused on how to

empower employees to make their own decisions, unleash their potential, enable learning,

and improve performance (Rogers, 2000). However, as information and communication

technologies (ICT), such as smartphones, e-mail, and online meetings have continuously

transformed how people work, sales managers must alter their coaching process to match

today's complex business environment. One of the critical themes of ICT research pertains to where work can be done (Makarius & Larson, 2017). Over the last couple of decades, various technologies have been developed that allow for flexible work arrangements. Salespeople who work independently in a different geographic territory from the corporate office may now communicate with their sales manager via phone, e-mail, and text in addition to having face-to-face interactions either in-person or using ICT such as FaceTime, Skype, or Zoom. In line with media naturalness theory (MNT), coaching remotely via computer-mediated communication technology requires more significant cognitive effort than face-to-face (F2F) coaching and will therefore be perceived as less pleasant and natural than coaching done in-person (Blau & Caspi, 2010). Choosing an appropriate communication method that fits the nature of a coaching session could benefit productivity and individual experiences with a geographically dispersed work environment (Maruping & Agarwal, 2004).

Practitioner publications on the subject of sales coaching seem to agree that coaching positively affects employees' satisfaction and motivation (Dvorak, 2017; Smith, 2020; Thomas, 2021). However, many companies face challenges in their implementation of organizational programs that support frontline sales managers with their formal sales coaching efforts (Cameron, 2017). This is unfortunate, because effective coaching provides salespeople the opportunity to explore areas of improvement and the guidance to make meaningful change, likely leading to better performance.

This dissertation seeks to explore the relationship between sales coaching and variables such as a salesperson's psychological needs, job motivation, and sales creativity to better understand why performance should increase after routine coaching sessions.

These variables were selected for investigation based on prior conceptual and empirical research which indicated their significance in understanding job performance (Cron et al., 2005; Groza et al., 2016; Lassk et al., 2012; Miao et al., 2007; Plank et al., 2018; Yoo et al., 2014).

Coaching modality will also be studied in this dissertation to identify if sales coaching can be done effectively in a remote working environment. This is timely since a recent survey conducted by Upwork of 1,000 hiring managers predicts that 22% of the workforce in the United States will be working remotely by the year 2025, which is an 87% increase from pre-pandemic levels (Ozimek, n.d.).

Due to the importance of coaching in sales leadership research, Rapp and Beeler (2021) have recently called for studies to be conducted on the topic of sales coaching. The purpose of this dissertation is to address this need and is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: How does coaching influence a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction and motivation to do their job?

RQ2: How does coaching ultimately influence a salesperson's performance?

RQ3: Can a sales manager effectively coach their sales team members virtually?

My dissertation makes several contributions to both the theory and practice of sales coaching. First, although academic research exists on sales coaching, prior studies are fragmented and do not provide a broad knowledge base to further research understanding and support practitioners (Badrinarayanan et al., 2015). See Table 1.1 for a summary of prior sales coaching research and their key findings. While research exists proposing that sales coaching can influence a variety of positive outcomes, Onyemah

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(2009) asserts that "although coaching has been identified as a critical sales managers' function, it has attracted very limited attention in the sales force literature" (p. 939). This dissertation answers this call to research.

Table 1.1. *Sales Coaching Literature Review.*

Author(s) and Journal	Sample	Variables Used	Key Findings
Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2002 IMM	51 sales professionals	Value laddering methodological technique identified three major attributes of effective sales managers: communicator, motivator, and coach	This study developed a rich understanding of the attributes of effective sales managers and the impact of those attributes on salespeople.
Hawes & Rich, 1998 JPSSM	Conceptual	Outlined three constructs of feedback, role modeling, and trust and related them to established theory to better understand why sales coaching can be effective at improving a salesperson's performance	The researchers provide support for the importance of sales coaching and suggest that the three constructs of sales coaching must work together vs. independent of each other.
Kemp et al., 2013 EJM	154 salespeople	IVs: Emotional exhaustion, rumination, control over time, positive emotions, motivation, future expectations, sales manager support DV: Customer-oriented selling	This study addresses how sales managers impact the emotional health and well-being of the salespeople they coach.
Nguyen et al., 2019 JPSSM	Scale Development	Three dimensional (adaptability, involvement, and rapport), 14-item sales coaching scale, was developed and tested among a sample of B2B sales professionals across a variety of industries	The research team was able to identify, measure, and validate the dimensions of a sales manager that can increase sales coaching effectiveness.

Table 1.1 cont.

Onyemah, 2009 EJM	2,532 salespeople	IV: Coaching Moderators: Person-organization value fit, quality of communication with management, number of years of formal education, confidence in the superiority of product over competitors, organizational tenure, age DVs: Affective commitment, intrinsic motivation, role ambiguity, satisfaction with job, satisfaction with supervisor	With leader-member exchange theory as a foundation, the findings show how, under different situations, coaching influences the attitudes and behaviors of salespeople.
Pousa & Mathieu, 2014 IJBM	122 financial advisors with sales responsibilities	IV: Coaching Mediators: Customer orientation, sales orientation DV: Performance	Drew on prior literature and leader-member exchange theory to identify how coaching based on mutual trust, openness, and quality of exchanges affects a salesperson's customer orientation.

Second, I bring SDT into the sales literature to help sales scholars and practitioners alike understand how the need for personal growth, and the mechanisms of coaching, ultimately influence outcome variables such as sales creativity and job performance. The results from this dissertation will have implications for how salespeople are managed. When sales managers utilize effective coaching strategies based on the tenets of SDT, this can produce cognitive benefits that lead to improved psychological health for their salespeople (Shuck & Reio, 2014). Well coached salespeople experience curiosity, vigor, and a proactive approach to work because their

primary psychological needs are being met likely leading to better job performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Finally, since less-natural forms of communication (e.g., instant messaging or texts) have a negative impact on the quality of human interactions due to the lack of nonverbal cues (DeRosa et al., 2004), my dissertation helps answer the question of whether or not sales coaching can be effectively conveyed using technology like Zoom or Slack in a remote working environment. Improving the performance of the sales team is a primary goal for companies to increase competitiveness (Marshall et al., 2000). Companies spend considerable amounts of money on technology every year and look to get increased productivity and performance from their investments (Marshall et al., 2000). To meet these goals, researchers and practitioners alike need to better understand how ICT adoption can impact the coaching process.

Because selling is a problem-solving exercise, a salesperson requires effective coaching from their sales manager to help them understand and anticipate customer's needs (Pollitt, 2012). Findings from this dissertation provide outcomes of the sales coaching process and is laid out as follows: Chapter 2 will contain a thorough literature review, theoretical underpinnings, and definitions of the constructs used; the conceptual model and hypotheses tested are also provided. Chapter 3 consists of the methodology section including sample and data collection, measures, pretest, and method for data analysis. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the data analysis and results of the study as well as managerial implications, recommendations for future research, and conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents the theoretical framework and foundational strategy for this dissertation. Specifically, the relationship between coaching behaviors and improved job performance will be explored. My dissertation will examine psychological needs satisfaction, job motivation, and sales creativity as important variables in the transfer of knowledge between a manager and employee in the sales environment. A unique aspect of this research is that salespeople are asked the degree of virtuality they experience when being coached by their sales manager.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 Self-Determination Theory

SDT suggests that all people have a natural inclination towards growth and self-actualization. Considering the different reasons people invest effort into their job is important, because autonomous regulation leads to a variety of favorable outcomes, such as well-being and performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000). SDT has been used successfully in managerial literature (Leroy et al., 2015; Martinaityte et al., 2019; Wallace et al., 2016) and proposes that people have basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and

competence. The need for autonomy is the need to experience behavior as voluntary. People want to have freedom of choice and feel in charge of their own goals. SDT maintains that employees become more creative in an autonomy-supportive environment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The need for relatedness is the individual's desire to "interact, be connected to, and experience caring for others" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). People want to maintain meaningful relationships and have close, safe, and satisfying interactions with others. The need for competence is the individual's need to master their job responsibilities, learn various skills, and feel a sense of efficacy (Deci & Ryan, 2000). People feel motivated by activities which allow them to satisfy these three needs. Those activities are enjoyable and driven by intrinsic motivation.

Two important concepts associated with SDT research are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is defined as doing an activity because of its inherent satisfaction, rather than having an ulterior motive, and is characterized by "engaging in behaviors for their own sake" (Patrick & Williams, 2012, p. 2). Intrinsic motivation is intangible and comes from within. There are internal drivers that motivate us to act in certain ways, including our core values, our interests, and our individual sense of morality. When intrinsically motivated to do an activity, people experience feelings of enjoyment, personal accomplishment, and excitement. However, extrinsic motivation initiates behavior for the sake of avoiding punishment or getting a reward. Rewards can be tangible, such as money or grades, or intangible, such as esteem and status (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Within extrinsic motivation there is a range of behavioral regulations signaling the degree to which the behavior has been incorporated into the individual's perception of self and an awareness of who they are. This range, illustrated in Figure 2.1, includes:

- External regulation, where behavior is driven by external incentives such rewards and punishments and is a form of motivation typically experienced as controlled and non-autonomous (Ryan & Deci, 2020);

- Introjected regulation, when one engages in behavior to lessen guilt and avoid demonstration of failure or out of a need to prove something to oneself or others (Zhang et al., 2016);

- Identified regulation, where the behavior is valued and as a result an individual experiences a fairly high degree of willingness to act, even though the behavior itself is not enjoyable (Edmunds et al., 2006);

- Integrated regulation, which is the most autonomous kind of extrinsic motivation and appears when "the person not only recognizes and identifies with the value of the activity, but also finds it to be congruent with other core interests and values" even though the activity itself is not seen as being enjoyable (Ryan & Deci, 2020, p. 3).

External Regulation	**Introjected Regulation**	**Identified Regulation**	**Integrated Regulation**
Behaving to gain some reward or avoid some negative contingency.	Behaving out of a sense of of guilt or obligation or a need to prove something.	Behaving because of the importance one ascribes to the behavior.	Behaving becuase the behavior is consistent with other goals and values.

Figure 2.1. Extrinsic Motivation Continuum (Ryan & Deci, 2020).

At first glance, intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation might seem to be incompatible and diametrically opposed, with intrinsic motivated behaviors being performed because of the sense of personal satisfaction that they bring, and extrinsic motivated behaviors being performed in order to receive a reward or avoid punishment, but there is another important distinction in the types of motivation that SDT explores. Individuals are complex beings who are rarely driven by just intrinsic motivation or by just extrinsic motivation. Thus, SDT also takes into consideration autonomous motivation and controlled motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Autonomous motivation is defined as "engaging in a behavior because it is perceived to be consistent with intrinsic goals or outcomes and emanates from the self" (Hagger et al., 2014). Put another way, the behavior is self-determined. When a person is autonomously motivated, they "feel a sense of choice, personal endorsement, interest, and satisfaction" in their actions and, consequently, are likely to persist with the behavior. (Hagger et al., 2014, p. 566). Controlled motivation, on the other hand, indicates the experience of coercion in the determination of a person's actions, most frequently driven by external factors (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The autonomy-control continuum (Ryan & Deci, 2017) as illustrated in Figure 2.2, is an extension of the intrinsic-extrinsic spectrum, representing the gamut between autonomous regulation and controlled regulation.
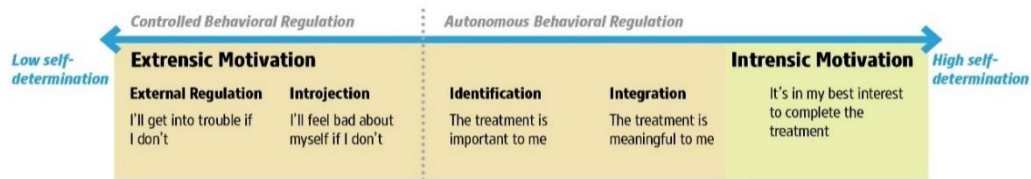
Figure 2.2. Autonomy-Control Continuum (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

The differences between autonomous and controlled motivation in SDT are important, as the theory suggests that these motivations vary in terms of both their underlying regulatory processes and the associated experiences. Although self-determination is usually what people strive for, we cannot help but be motivated by external sources. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation are influential factors of human behavior, and they drive us to meet the three basic psychological needs identified by SDT.

Salespeople, like most members of society, want to enjoy the work they are doing. Feeling intrinsically motivated can help one feel more committed, passionate, interested, and satisfied with the things that they do. SDT suggests that the social environment influences intrinsic motivation through its impact on perceptions of autonomy, relatedness, and competence (Grouzet et al., 2004). Emphasizing the importance of the social environment on SDT, Deci and Ryan (1985) state:

> Social environments can, according to this perspective, either facilitate or enable the growth and integration propensities with which the human psyche is endowed, or they can disrupt, forestall, and fragment these processes resulting in behaviors and inner experiences that represent the darker side of humanity. (p. 6)

Thus, SDT indicates that social contexts, such as the workplace, that value autonomous behaviors while simultaneously fulfilling the three basic psychological needs will foster self-determination.

2.1.2 Media Naturalness Theory

With the expansion of technologies used for communications due in large part to the advent of the Internet in the early 1990s, ICT research has grown dramatically.

Several theories provide guidance in helping examine virtual interactions in a wide range of contexts, such as knowledge transfer (Baehr, 2012) and education (Keller, 2013). One theoretical view, MNT, is consistent with the premise that ICTs pose obstacles to communication since the interaction is less natural (Kock, 2005). Kock (2005) identifies five elements of natural communication that need to be considered when determining the naturalness of a medium: Are those communicating located in the same physical environment, can communication exchanges happen quickly, can facial expressions, body language, and other nonverbal cues be observed and adequately conveyed, and can participants speak and be heard. From an evolutionary perspective, synchronous face-to-face (F2F) communication, using auditory sounds and visual cues, has been the primary mode of communication of humans since well before recorded history, which means that people are hard-wired for F2F interactions (Kock, 2002). Therefore, it is unlikely that one can communicate optimally when the ICT used is too far removed from F2F communication (e.g., the ability to change the tone or pitch of voice to express a more precise meaning).

MNT contends that F2F conversations have the highest level of natural communication and a decrease in the degree of naturalness of the ICT used, or its degree of dissimilarity to the F2F medium, leads to the following effects in connection with a communication interaction: increased cognitive effort; increased communication ambiguity; and decreased physiological arousal (Kock, 2005). F2F and synchronous video communication both allow for many of the aspects identified as important by MNT such as: allowing individuals to speak their thoughts and ideas clearly; receive near-immediate feedback; and notice body language, tonality, and facial expressions (Kreijns

et al., 2003). Thus, these channels may improve the naturalness of the interaction between a sales manager and their remote employee (Israel et al., 2013). MNT has important implications for the selection, use, and deployment of digital communications tools in a company.

2.2 Construct Definitions and Hypothesis Development

2.2.1 Coaching

The practice of coaching has a long history (Bond & Seneque, 2013) and is rooted in many areas of psychology such as those of clinical, social, cognitive, occupational, sports, and educational (Wildflower, 2013). Coaching in a business environment is a human resource development practice in which a more experienced manager provides an employee with frequent advice and guidance intended to help develop the individual's skill set and improve their overall job performance (Brown et al., 2019). The role of a coach, in part, is to strengthen an employee's self-efficacy for job related tasks so that there is a lasting sense of commitment that is resistant to obstacles and rejections (Latham & Wexley, 1981).

Companies are now recognizing the key role coaching plays in individual, team, and organizational success. Nowhere, perhaps, does coaching play a larger role within a company than in sales. Sales coaching is defined as the process of evaluating a salesperson's skills, knowledge, and readiness, and offering feedback that enable them to achieve sales and company goals (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2002). This conceptualization suggests that coaching geared toward performance improvement is multi-dimensional in

that these interventions with salespeople will impact their thinking, feelings, and actions. Applying this concept, I operationalize coaching in this dissertation as the proficiency with which sales managers engage in quality coaching behaviors that contribute toward the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral development of their subordinates.

Sales coaching is vital for a variety of reasons. First, knowing that sales has never been an easy job, salespeople especially need effective sales coaching now more than ever as business-to-business (B2B) buying habits continue to shift drastically in today's marketplace (Cluytens, 2016). Second, it allows sales managers to improve sales processes, training techniques, and identify progress and areas of need (Behar & Jacoby, 2018). Finally, and most importantly, sales coaching has a significant impact on performance. According to Peter Ostrow (2015) from Aberdeen Research, companies with a formal approach to sales coaching have higher rates of customer retention, higher team attainment of quotas, and a higher percentage of individual salespeople achieving their quotas than non-adopters. Challenges for companies with uncoached or under coached salespeople include missed quotas, inconsistent messaging, and lack of sales readiness.

Constructive feedback given during coaching sessions represents a motivational force as it enhances a salesperson's self-efficacy (Vroom, 1964). A salesperson with higher self-efficacy in general performs their job well (Brown & Peterson, 1994). Past studies have shown that effective coaching can motivate salespeople and significantly increase their job performance (Challagalla & Shervani, 1996; Good, 1993; Graham et al., 1994; Onyemah, 2009). Despite these findings, there is still much to be learned about the sales coaching process. For instance, Ellinger et al. (2003) identified that there is little

empirical research on the link between a managers' coaching actions and employees'
attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, there is a need to better understand the role sales
coaching plays on a salesperson's psychological needs and job motivation. Since this
dissertation analyzes how high-quality coaching relationships between sales managers
and their employees might positively impact salespersons' behavioral variables, sales
coaching is hypothesized to have a direct positive relationship on the psychological needs
satisfaction and intrinsic job motivation of the salesperson. Thus,

>**H1a**: There is a positive relationship between coaching and the psychological
>needs satisfaction of a salesperson.

>**H1b**: There is a positive relationship between coaching and a salesperson's
>intrinsic job motivation.

2.2.2 Coaching Modality

At its best coaching is about forming a partnership, rather than one person being
the expert and lecturing the other. Successful coaching relies on a good relationship,
mutual trust, and freedom of expression between coaches and their employees (Bartlett,
2007). High levels of F2F contact are beneficial to creating and reinforcing a relationship
of mutual trust between people (Roberts, 2000). Furthermore, the richness of F2F contact
can help offset the communications challenges arising from differences in culture and
language (Boutellier et al., 1998). However, the availability of modern ICT is
transforming the practice of coaching away from F2F interactions. By introducing ICT
into the coaching session, it influences the relationship between the coaching process and
coaching outcomes (Boyce & Clutterbuck, 2011). Furthermore, Kock (2002) purports
that communicating via e-mail or text messaging, which are less natural, has a negative

impact on the quality of the conversation, because there is an insufficient number of nonverbal cues conveyed.

Being an effective sales manager is more than just analyzing won and lost deals and reporting on where prospects are in the sales pipeline. Sales managers must be good leaders as well as provide quality coaching for members of their team. Most salespeople reach their full potential through effective supervision activities that involve continual guidance and feedback by the sales manager (Hawes & Rich, 1998). An effective sales manager must be nimble, flexible, and understand the challenges of managing employees remotely. Managers must be clear and consistent when coaching their employees, even more so when doing so using ICT. Employees suffer when they are deprived of routine feedback (Berger, 2020). ICT like Zoom or Slack allows for face-to-face or text-based communication when employees are working remotely, so managers can provide positive or constructive feedback on a regular basis.

Using ICT is not new in sales, as sales teams have been integrating technology into their daily job activities for many years with the introductions of the telephone, fax machines, and computers (Ahearne et al., 2004). However, while the usage of ICT has offered productivity, efficiency, and flexibility, stress can be introduced due to the salesperson's inability to adapt to the new, and every changing, technology (Tarafdar et al., 2019). The degree to which the coaching modality negatively influences coaching outcomes depends on factors such as does the coaching interaction take place F2F either in-person or using a communication tool such as FaceTime, Skype, WebEx, or GoToMeeting, or does the sales manager coach using e-mail, instant messaging (IM), by phone, or by text messaging (Hui et al., 2021). While the primary focus of this study is to

understand how coaching impacts salespeople's behaviors and job performance, the modality of the coaching interaction is central to further understanding the practice of sales coaching. Researchers have begun studying how less-natural forms of communication such as e-mail and IM negatively impact the quality of coaching interactions, but the pace of research has not matched the more rapid pace of technological development. (Hui et al., 2021; Ribbers & Waringa, 2015).

While the introduction of ICT to support the practice of sales coaching can be stressful for some, it is becoming more commonplace due to the nature of the current business environment. Although, questions remain as to whether quality coaching can occur using ICT. Since a greater understanding of how ICT impacts coaching is needed (Boyce & Clutterbuck, 2011) the following hypotheses are proposed:

H2a: Coaching modality moderates the positive relationship between coaching and the psychological needs satisfaction of a salesperson such that the relationship is stronger when the majority of the coaching is done in-person and weaker when the majority of the coaching is done virtually.

H2b: Coaching modality moderates the positive relationship between coaching and a salesperson's intrinsic job motivation such that the relationship is stronger when the majority of the coaching is done in-person and weaker when the majority of the coaching is done virtually.

2.2.3 Psychological Needs

Fundamental to SDT is the idea that the impact of various environmental factors on employees' motivations is mediated mostly by a small set of psychological needs that guide individuals' growth, well-being, and satisfaction (Deci et al., 2017). They are the

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needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy, which are essential for psychological

health and facilitate successful functioning in social settings (Ryan, 1995). SDT research

has repeatedly found that social settings such as workplaces that support satisfaction of

these three psychological needs facilitate enhanced performance (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

2.2.3.1 Job Autonomy.

Job autonomy is defined as "the degree to which a job provides substantial

freedom, independence, and discretion to the individual for scheduling work and

determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out" (Hackman & Oldham, 1975,

p.162). Having job autonomy makes employees feel self-determined and free from

external limits or controls (Deci et al., 1989). Prior research suggests that employees who

have the ability to determine how and when job related tasks are done are more satisfied,

because they see themselves as directly responsible for the outcomes of their work

(Hackman & Oldham, 1976). However, employees with low levels of job autonomy often

become frustrated with their work and are more likely to be apathic and suspicious (Naus

et al., 2007). Gagné and Deci (2005) identify several research studies that found that

supervisors' autonomy support leads to greater satisfaction of the needs for competence,

relatedness, and autonomy which, in turn, leads to favorable work behaviors or attitudes.

When there is company and managerial support for job autonomy, satisfaction of all three

of the psychological needs are often highly correlated because supervisors who support

autonomy are generally supportive of the employee's other needs.

Job autonomy has been identified as a precursor to motivation (Hackman, 1980)

and creativity (Zhang et al., 2017). SDT suggests that the need for autonomy is regarded

as vital for the motivation to perform an activity for itself allowing the experience of

pleasure and satisfaction inherent in the activity (Deci et al., 1989). Perceived autonomy indicates the affordances of autonomy through how a job is designed that should make possible to satisfy the need for autonomy, along with other aspects such as autonomy-supportive leadership (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Researchers have found that job autonomy is significantly related to many indicators of a healthy organizational culture such as organizational commitment (Parker et al., 2006) and intrinsic job motivation (Becherer et al., 1982). Thus, when employees feel support for autonomy, they also usually believe they are more connected to the organization and feel more effective (Deci at al., 2017).

Salesperson autonomy can be defined as "the felt ability to determine the nature of the sales task or problem and to arrive at a course of action" (Wang & Netemeyer, 2002, p. 218). As such, salespeople with the highest level of job autonomy are primarily responsible for building successful relationships with customers (Martin & Bush, 2006). When sales managers provide an autonomous motivation climate, it provides salespeople a work environment that maximizes individual autonomy and the focus shifts to job enjoyment rather than being simply outcome based (Cerasoli et al., 2014).

High levels of job autonomy allow salespeople the freedom to use their skills, knowledge, and creativity to carry out sales tasks, thereby encouraging greater levels of intellectual and creative engagement (Wang & Netemeyer, 2002). Salespeople need the autonomy to think outside-the-box when needed in order to close the deal. However, sales managers, in addition to giving the liberty to take autonomous actions towards a sale, must continue to coach the discipline of tried-and-true sales tactics (Longren, 2018).

2.2.3.2 Self-Efficacy.

        According to Bandura (1986), self-efficacy, a central concept in self-determination theory, is a person's judgment of their "capabilities to organize and execute courses of action required to attain designated types of performances" (p. 391). Perceived self-efficacy impacts a person's effort, determination, and how challenges are approached (Schunk, 1991). Self-efficacy is a measure of the confidence an individual has in his or her ability to marshal the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to address job situations (Schaubroeck & Merritt, 1997). Put simply, self-efficacy is a person's belief in his or her ability to succeed in a specific situation. It is a self-sustaining trait that grows stronger as a person works through problems. It has been suggested that the effect of self-efficacy on performance is largely through "enlistment of effort and creative use of capabilities and resources" (Wood & Bandura, 1989, p. 374). As research has shown, self-efficacy can have an impact on everything from behavior to motivation (Bandura, 1977). A belief in one's own ability to succeed contributes to how we think, how we act, and how we feel about our general situation in life.

        A person's self-efficacy plays a crucial role in the self-regulation of motivation. Most human motivation is cognitively generated. People can readily identify goals they want to complete; however, most recognize that getting started is not always so simple. Researchers have repeatedly found that an individual's self-efficacy plays a critical role in how objectives, tasks, and challenges are approached (Bandura, 1997). The stronger the perception of self-efficacy held by a person, the greater the amount of effort that person will expend on a given task (Bandura, 1977). Brown, Jones, and Leigh (2005) find that "individuals who have positive self-efficacy beliefs focus their attention and

motivation on the tasks necessary for achieving targeted performance levels and persevere in the face of difficulties" (p. 974). Individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy approach difficult tasks as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided, whereas those with self-doubt about their capabilities believe that difficult tasks and situations are beyond their capabilities (Bandura, 1997).

Empirical studies have found that individuals who have higher levels of self-efficacy tend to achieve better performance (Gist & Mitchell, 1992). In addition, there is evidence that self-efficacy positively affects job performance indirectly through other variables as well such as personal goal and effort level (Brown et al., 2005; Jaramillo & Mulki, 2008). Sales research has identified that self-efficacy is positively related to adaptive selling and salesperson's effort (Spiro & Weitz, 1990; Sujan et al., 1994). Salespeople who believe in themselves spend less time feeling doubt and worrying. Instead, they focus mostly on overcoming obstacles, pursuing prospects, and getting the job done. In a sales coaching context, self-efficacy relates to the salesperson's ability to participate in the coaching session with their sales manager, working together to identify obstacles that may be keeping the deal from closing. Salespeople who feel more comfortable with their selling skills and knowledge developed through coaching are more likely to transfer those skills to the field (Drake-Knight, 2012).

The more self-efficacious a salesperson, the more effort and vigor they will expend to closing the sale. Self-efficacy is thus a significant motivational construct that "influences individual choices, goals, emotional reactions, efforts, coping, and persistence" (Gist & Mitchell, 1992, p. 186). Because self-efficacy beliefs foster intrinsic job motivation by enhancing perceptions of self-competence (Bandura, 1986; Deci &

Ryan, 1985), self-efficacy may also reflect intrinsic job motivation to engage in creative activities at work (Martinaityte & Sacramento, 2013). As such, self-efficacy should be a strong precursor to creativity (Gong et al., 2009). This would be particularly true in sales since creative salespeople are more likely to think divergently about their products and service offerings and can therefore convince their customers to agree to terms by providing a wider and more desirable array of benefits.

2.2.3.3 Sense of Relatedness.

According to SDT, human beings have three basic psychological needs that are essential for intrinsic motivation and well-being to occur (Ryan et al., 1996). The psychological need for relatedness is a yearning to have close relationships and tends to be satisfied when individuals feel emotionally and meaningfully connected with others in their surroundings (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Kipp and Amorose (2008) define relatedness as "an individual's desire to have satisfying and consistent involvement with others" (p. 110). When people believe they are socially attached to others, the belonging need is met. Therefore, relatedness is a matter of relational responsiveness and sensitivity (Ryan & Deci, 2017). Researchers often measure relatedness in a corporate environment using an employee's perception of their social support at work (Van den Broeck et al., 2010).

SDT offers a way to understand the relationship between social environments at work and the employee's experiences within them, especially in a remote working environment. Based on a meta-analysis conducted by Gajendran and Harrison (2007), when employees work remotely three or more days each week, relationships with their colleagues are negatively impacted because more frequent in-person communication is needed for employees to feel a sense of relatedness with their co-workers. The social

support and collaboration would need to be fulfilled through the use of ICT. For some, using ICT to stay connected with colleagues would suffice. However, for others, the absence of in-person interactions with co-workers may be demotivating (Deci et al., 2017).

SDT suggests that relatedness is an essential requirement for the initiation of behaviors driven by intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1991). Relatedness promotes intrinsic motivation by providing the support needed from growth and action (Ryan & Deci, 2000). A person's intrinsic motivation is more likely to develop when they feel a sense of relatedness. Intrinsic regulation for coaching is a positive motivational condition that promotes ideal functioning at work and is affected by the quality of emotional bonds a person is able to develop with others (Ryan & Deci, 2017). When a salesperson experiences relatedness with their sales manager, they derive greater satisfaction from the coaching session and are more likely to perceive themselves as more competent (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Based on SDT, when salespeople experience a great sense of autonomy, self-efficacy, and relatedness, they will be more motivated to carry out revenue-generating sales tasks and activities which will contribute positively to company performance. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H3a: There is a positive relationship between meeting a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction and their intrinsic job motivation.

H3b: There is a positive relationship between meeting a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction and their sales creativity.

H3c: There is a positive relationship between meeting a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction and their job performance.

H4a: Meeting a salesperson's psychological needs mediates the relationship between coaching and their intrinsic job motivation.

H4b: Meeting a salesperson's psychological needs mediates the relationship between coaching and their sales creativity.

H4c: Meeting a salesperson's psychological needs mediates the relationship between coaching and their job performance.

2.2.4 Intrinsic Job Motivation

Intrinsic job motivation is defined as the degree to which an individual is motivated to do their job well purely because of their self-esteem (Lawler & Hall, 1970). A 2012 study from McKinsey & Company shows that employees who are intrinsically motivated are 32% more committed to their job, have 46% higher job satisfaction, and perform 16% better than other employees (Bazigos & Caruso, 2016). When one performs a task for the pure enjoyment of it, they are doing so because they are intrinsically motivated. The motivations for engaging in the behavior occur solely from within rather than out of a need to gain some type of external reward. Essentially, the behavior itself is its own reward. When an employee is intrinsically motivated, they genuinely care about their work, they look for better ways to do it, and they are motivated and fulfilled by doing their job well (Thomas, 2000). Experimental and field research, guided by SDT, has found intrinsic motivation to predict performance, creativity, and psychological wellness (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

As work becomes more dynamic and knowledge-based, companies increasingly depend on creative ideas and innovative instincts from their employees. Creative employees are the ones that do much of the high value-added work in today's economy (Florida, 2019). Creativity and innovation are critical for the company's competitive advantage as they help to enhance performance and product quality (Anderson et al., 2014). Creativity is largely seen as the development of useful and novel ideas while innovation suggests the execution of these ideas (Anderson et al., 2014). Prior research has shown that intrinsic motivation guides the direction, intensity, and persistence of performance behaviors (Deci et al., 2017). Intrinsic motivation helps employees be more creative and yields higher quality effort (Auger & Woodman, 2016). When an individual enjoys the work they are doing, they put all of their energy into it because the task itself is rewarding. As a result, they have more innovative, unique ideas (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). In their review article, Ambrose and Kulik (1999) stated, "individual-level creativity is closely linked to the motivational process and research on creativity has either implicitly or explicitly used motivation as an invisible, internal, hypothetical construct directing employee behavior'' (p. 266).

Empirical research also indicates that intrinsic motivation as a predictor of job performance is strongly supported (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Grant, 2008; Joo et al., 2010; Taghipour & Dejban, 2013). An employee's job performance is the total expected value to the company of their work output accomplished over a specified time period (Motowidlo, 2003). Job performance is measured according to the quantity and quality accomplished by employees in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Intrinsic motivation makes effort less aversive, leading employees to work harder, smarter, and be

more productive (Amabile, 1993). When intrinsic motivation is high, employees are more likely to push themselves toward completing their work since the work itself is inherently enjoyable (Grant, 2008). This is supported by Schlechter et al. (2015) who identified that superior job performance can derive from non-financial rewards, such as an employee working hard simply because they are motivated from within.

An employee's self-efficacy plays a major role as a basic need in SDT. Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's "beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance" (Bandura, 1994, p. 71). Many salespeople look to their sales manager as someone who will help them develop the necessary skills and abilities that they will need to be successful on the job. Prior research has shown that coaching impacts salespeople's attitudes and behaviors. For example, Onyemah (2009) identified that coaching can directly influence a salesperson's intrinsic motivation. As a sales manager, being able to improve an employee's perceived self-efficacy is vital. Efficacy beliefs are shaped "as a result of self-appraisal, and self-persuasion through cognitive processing of efficacy information derived from the following sources: past performance accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states" (Feltz et al., 2008, p. 293). It is the responsibility of the sales manager to extract the best performance from each salesperson through coaching, so the salesperson feels confident that they have the necessary capabilities to meet their revenue objectives.

Intrinsic job motivation is needed for employee creativity and improved performance to take place. In addition, sales managers must motivate and engage their salespeople with non-monetary (intrinsic) motivation. Therefore, I hypothesize the following:

H5a: There is a positive relationship between a salesperson's intrinsic job motivation and their sales creativity.

H5b: There is a positive relationship between a salesperson's intrinsic job motivation and their job performance.

H6a: A salesperson's intrinsic job motivation mediates the relationship between coaching and their sales creativity.

H6b: A salesperson's intrinsic job motivation mediates the relationship between coaching and their job performance.

2.2.5 Sales Creativity

Being successful in sales depends on how well one is able to differentiate themselves and their products or services from the competition (Iannarino, 2010), generate a greater number of leads (Harsh, 2021), and identify and articulate real insights for their customers (Fatemi, 2018b). These selling activities require creativity. The most effective sales professionals leverage their creativity to generate ideas that set them apart from their competition (Amabile et al., 2005). Creativity is a characteristic not often associated with salespeople, but researchers regard creativity as a critical skill for customer relationship management (Bradford et al., 2010) and the development of inventive sales tactics (Strutton et al., 2009). Wang and Netemeyer define salesperson creativity as "the amount of new ideas generated and novel behaviors exhibited by the salesperson in performing his or her job activities" (2004, p. 806). Creativity is important for salespeople because they are likely to confront new situations for which they have no immediately available solutions (Wang & Ma, 2013). Creative sales professionals do not consider the sales process to be a simple transaction, but rather a problem-solving

activity. Salespeople are motivated to learn more about their customers, thereby furthering their ability to provide unique, customized solutions for customer needs and problems (Evans et al., 2012).

Companies have grown increasingly dependent on innovation and creativity to compete and survive (Day & Shea, 2018). Creativity is the production of ideas, products, or procedures that are novel and potentially useful to the company (Amabile, 1988). Creativity involves collecting information from several sources, identifying unusual connections, and generating ideas with practical implications (Oldham & Cummings, 1996). Companies that foster creativity are 3.5 times more likely to surpass the competition in terms of revenue growth (Fatemi, 2018a). In order to develop a sustainable competitive advantage based on creativity, sales managers must encourage their salespeople to try to find more creative and innovative ways to influence buyers who are often engaging less and less. New approaches to the selling process are critical and require sufficient strategic planning that can benefit greatly if salespeople use more creative approaches at each step of the selling process (Piercy & Lane, 2005).

Creativity is one of the most undervalued sales skills and one of the most under researched areas in sales literature (Evans et al., 2012). Although researchers and practitioners generally agree that understanding more about creativity and nurturing increased creativity in industry is important, only a few studies have addressed the relationship between participating in a creative process and job performance (Gilson, 2008; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Exploring creativity in the realm of personal selling provides insight into potentially gaining a competitive advantage by developing deeper and stronger customer relationships. Selling tasks and activities such as finding new

clients, unearthing and identifying prospective customer needs, and customizing solutions to those needs all require creative thinking (Wang & Netemeyer, 2004). The selling process requires creative ability that thrives when salespeople are autonomously motivated (Cerasoli et al., 2014). In addition, the effectiveness and efficiency of carrying out varied job activities are likely to increase when the salesperson is able to creatively employ available resources and find new and superior ways of getting work done (Wang & Ma, 2013). Therefore, having the ability to come up with creative ideas and solutions when unusual situations and problems occur seems to be an important skill to foster. With so much importance placed on solution and consultative selling, research on salesperson creativity is timely and important. Consequently, this study examines the potential positive effect of salesperson creativity on job performance.

Finally, Lassk and Shepherd (2013) provide important insight that justifies examining how sales creativity mediates the relationship between a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction and intrinsic job motivation and their job performance. This prior study empirically explored the relationship between emotional intelligence and salesperson creativity and showed that creativity, within a sales environment, has a direct positive effect on job performance. In addition, these authors established that a salesperson's creativity is the key mediator explaining the influence of emotional intelligence on job performance. Adapting this logic, I expect a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction and intrinsic job motivation to influence their job performance through the mediating effect of sales creativity. Thus, the following hypotheses are considered:

H7: There is a positive relationship between a salesperson's sales creativity and their job performance.

H8a: A salesperson's creativity mediates the relationship between their psychological needs satisfaction and their job performance.

H8b: A salesperson's creativity mediates the relationship between their intrinsic job motivation and their job performance.

2.2.6 Job Performance

Determining what leads to a salesperson's positive job performance is a vital question for every sales manager and may be critical to the survival and success of the company (Muczyk & Gable, 1987). Job performance is also assumed to be related to the quality of the coaching provided. For the purposes of this dissertation, sales performance is defined as the "behavior that has been evaluated in terms of its contribution to the goals of the organization" (Walker et al., 1979, p. 33). Measuring a salesperson's job performance tends to vary from company-to-company. There is objective data, such as units sold, number of calls, or sales-to-quota ratio, housed in highly sophisticated CRM systems (Bolander et al., 2021) and subjective measures like sales managers' ratings and salesperson self-evaluations.

It is understood that someone will generally work harder to do something they want to do, than something they are being forced to do. Nigel Nicholson (2003) emphasized, "Change comes from within or not at all" (p. 59). However, sales managers can support internal motivation by establishing an environment that allow employees to satisfy their own needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy. This is an effective

way to sustain an employee's self-determination, intrinsic motivation, creativity, and individual performance (Deci et al., 2017; Gerhart & Fang, 2015).

Since selling is now primarily a problem-solving exercise, a salesperson requires effective coaching from their sales manager to help them understand and anticipate customer's needs (Pollitt, 2012). Salespeople hold specific expectations concerning the usefulness of a coaching session. If those expectations are met, satisfaction with the coaching session should be positive, and the issue requiring coaching likely corrected. However, if the expectations are not met, satisfaction with the coaching session may be negative, and the issue requiring coaching will likely go unresolved. Salespeople who ardently believe that they are capable of being successful based on the coaching provided by their sales manager should be more satisfied with their coaching than those possessing lower self-efficacy (Krishnan et al., 2002).

The relative benefits of high-quality virtual coaching are likely to be realized over time as the geographically dispersed salesperson begins solving their own problems based on the coaching received. As the benefits are acquired and practiced, their proficiency at tasks associated with the sales role and overall performance within their role will improve (Chen et al., 2005).

2.2.7 Control Variables

This dissertation seeks to understand how the sales coaching experience ultimately effects a salesperson's job performance. In order to more fully investigate the relationships between the variables in this study, it is important to control for extraneous variables that might influence the outcomes. Control variables are widely used in business and organizational research (Carlson & Wu, 2012) and will enhance the internal

validity of this study by limiting the influence of relevant extraneous factors (Bergh et al., 2004). Common control variables used in sales research are the demographics and the work characteristics of respondents that could affect the dependent variables being examined (Churchill et al., 1985).

Several demographic and job-related background questions are included in this dissertation. According to social learning theory, learning is a cognitive process that takes place in a social context and occurs through observation or direct instruction (Bandura & McClelland, 1977). Compared to formal classroom learning techniques, social learning centers on how we interact on the job with our co-workers and managers for skill acquisition. Work experience increases job performance because working provides the employee the opportunity to acquire relevant skills and knowledge through coaching or observing other employees that can in turn enhance performance (Weiss, 1990; Wright & Bonett, 2002). Therefore, survey respondents were asked about their overall sales experience and length of employment with their current company.

Previous research suggests that empowering leader behaviors positively impacts the work ethic of salespeople (Rapp et al., 2006). Hence, how long a salesperson has worked for their sales manager is likely to affect performance due to the ongoing and cumulative coaching the salesperson receives. Thus, survey respondents were asked how long they have worked for their current sales manager.

Salesperson age, gender, and education level are frequently controlled for in sales research because of their clear effects on job performance (Bolander et al., 2015; Fu, 2009; Lee & Sukoco, 2010); therefore, questions related to these demographic characteristics were included as control variables in this dissertation. An older

salesperson will likely have a significant number of industry contacts due to more time

spent in the field. The more contacts a salesperson has, the more leads they can call on,

ultimately leading to more closed deals. Due to in-group bias, a salesperson's gender may

affect their ability to build a network in their given field. Without a strong network, fewer

sales opportunities may present themselves. A formal education provides individuals the

opportunity to acquire more declarative and procedural knowledge. Declarative

knowledge is knowledge about facts and things and procedural knowledge is knowledge

about how to perform certain cognitive activities (Banks & Millward, 2007). Usable

knowledge in sales is critical. For example, salespeople who can quickly piece together

several different facts about their customer needs to make and execute a sales pitch will

be more effective at their jobs.

2.3 Summary

Employing SDT (Deci & Ryan, 1985) and MNT (Kock, 2005), this dissertation

investigates the hypothesized positive impact of coaching on a salesperson's job

performance and how coaching modality moderates this relationship. These two theories

are complementary, in the sense that each one explains a critical part of the coaching

relationship in a modern-day distributed workforce. SDT is a theory of human motivation

which suggests that individuals can be self-determined when their needs for competence,

relatedness, and autonomy are fulfilled. MNT applies Darwinian evolutionary principles

to suggest which types of ICT best fit innate human communications requirements. The

fundamental conclusions of this chapter form a conceptual model that is summarized in

Figure 2.3.

Media Naturalness Theory

Self-Determination Theory

Coaching Modality

Psychological Needs
*Perceived Autonomy
*Self-efficacy
*Sense of Relatedness

Sales Creativity

Coaching

Intrinsic Job Motivation
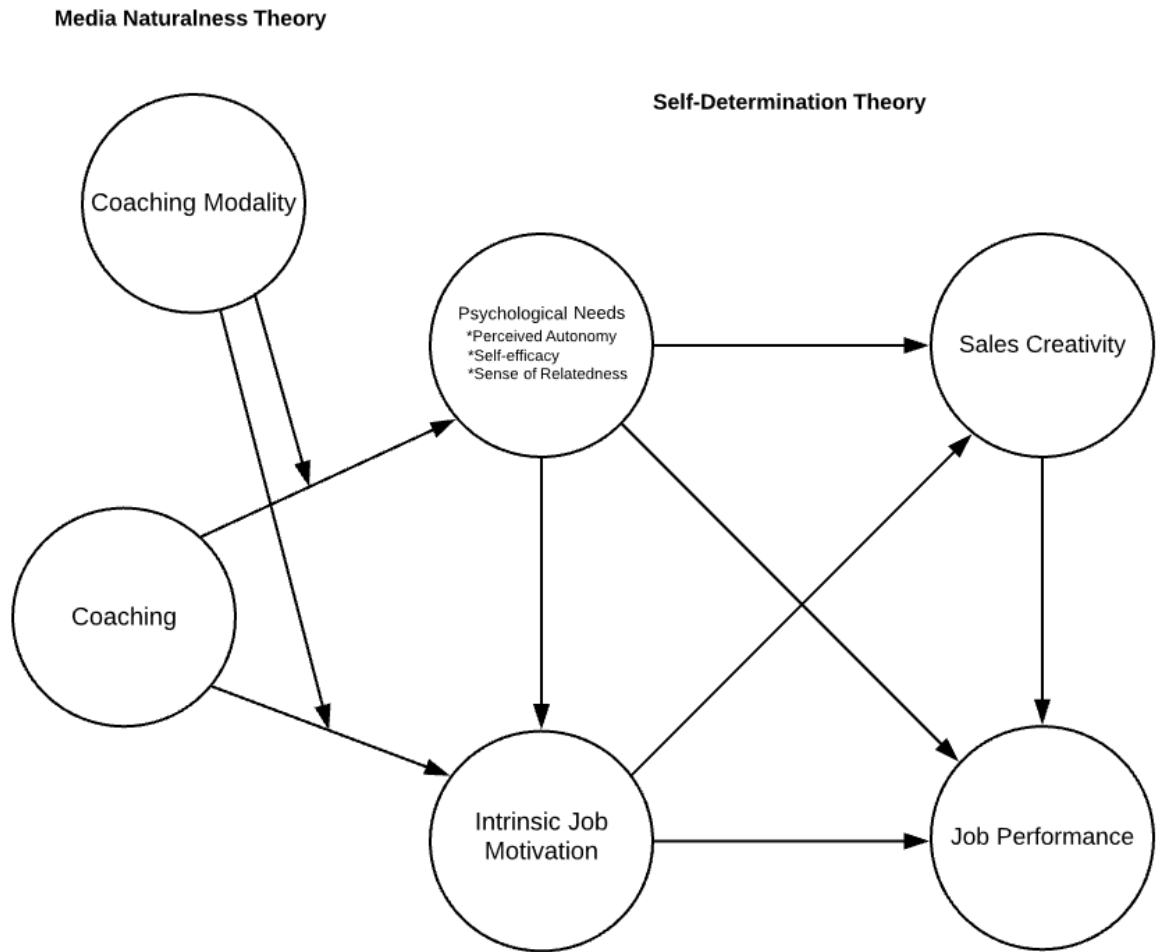
Job Performance

Figure 2.3. Conceptual Model of the Relationship between Coaching, Coaching Modality, and a Salesperson's Psychological Needs Satisfaction on Job Motivation, Creativity, and Performance.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This dissertation examines if coaching can influence a salesperson's performance and whether a sales manager can effectively coach members of their sales team virtually. The goal of this chapter is to present the research methodology used in this dissertation. The design of the study, sampling and data collection procedures, measurement instruments, and the methods that were employed to empirically test the conceptual model are outlined in detail. A summary of the hypotheses tested in this dissertation is provided in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. *Summary of Hypotheses.*

Hypothesis	Description
H1a	There is a positive relationship between coaching and the psychological needs satisfaction of a salesperson.
H1b	There is a positive relationship between coaching and a salesperson's intrinsic job motivation.
H2a	Coaching modality moderates the positive relationship between coaching and the psychological needs satisfaction of a salesperson such that the relationship is stronger when the majority of the coaching is done in-person and weaker when the majority of the coaching is done virtually.
H2b	Coaching modality moderates the positive relationship between coaching and a salesperson's intrinsic job motivation such that the relationship is stronger when the majority of the coaching is done in-person and weaker when the majority of the coaching is done virtually.
H3a	There is a positive relationship between meeting a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction and their intrinsic job motivation.

Table 3.1. cont.

H3b	There is a positive relationship between meeting a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction and their sales creativity.
H3c	There is a positive relationship between meeting a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction and their job performance.
H4a	Meeting a salesperson's psychological needs mediates the relationship between coaching and their intrinsic job motivation.
H4b	Meeting a salesperson's psychological needs mediates the relationship between coaching and their sales creativity.
H4c	Meeting a salesperson's psychological needs mediates the relationship between coaching and their job performance.
H5a	There is a positive relationship between a salesperson's intrinsic job motivation and their sales creativity.
H5b	There is a positive relationship between a salesperson's intrinsic job motivation and their job performance.
H6a	A salesperson's intrinsic job motivation mediates the relationship between coaching and their sales creativity.
H6b	A salesperson's intrinsic job motivation mediates the relationship between coaching and their job performance.
H7	There is a positive relationship between a salesperson's sales creativity and their job performance.
H8a	A salesperson's creativity mediates the relationship between their psychological needs satisfaction and their job performance.
H8b	A salesperson's creativity mediates the relationship between their intrinsic job motivation and their job performance.

3.1 Design

A nonexperimental quantitative cross-sectional survey research design was used to investigate the relationships between the independent and dependent variables studied (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). A quantitative research study is one that "collects some type of numerical data to answer a given research question" (Christensen et al., 2014, p. 26). Cross-sectional research studies collect information from a study group at just one single point in time (Saunders et al., 2012). A survey research design was selected because they can attain higher external validity and allow a researcher to collect data on

more variables and on larger samples than other comparable research methods (Lee &

Lings, 2008). Quantitative studies are a common approach in sales research when

studying predictors of job performance (Wihler et al., 2017). Prior researchers have used

quantitative survey research design methods to study the sales profession (Bonney et al.,

2014; Kimura et al., 2018; Peasley et al., 2020). The survey incorporated questions

related to each of the constructs proposed in the conceptual model along with applicable

control variables. In addition, filter questions were asked to ensure that respondents are

currently working as salespeople and that they paid attention when filling out the survey.

3.2 Sample and Data Collection

In order to capture adequate heterogeneity, the data consisted of a nation-wide

sample of 332 salespeople from various industries collected electronically through a

Prolific survey panel and snowball sample. Prolific maintains a nationally representative

panel of salespeople and data from this source has been used in prior sales research

(Chaker et al., 2021; Ryari et al., 2021). Snowball sampling involves beginning with a

small population of study subjects and expands the sample by asking those initial

participants, in the case of this dissertation former students who are now in sales roles, to

identify others that would be potentially applicable to the given inquiry (Biernacki &

Waldorf, 1981). Drawing survey respondents from a broad range of different companies

and industries allows results to be generalized (Otley & Pollanen, 2000). Survey research

is a quantitative method through which research participants, who are selected to

represent the population being studied, fill out a questionnaire. Survey research is an

especially useful approach when a researcher is attempting to describe a "given state of

affairs that exists at a given time" from a target population being studied (Christensen et al., 2014, p. 314). Recent studies have used online survey panels as a reliable data collection method (Courtright et al., 2016; Quade et al., 2019). Participants were from the United States who are full-time employees of a company (i.e., no retired or student members) who have direct and frequent in-person contact with their sales manager.

Because all measures were collected from the same person at the same time using a single online questionnaire, common method bias (CMB) may contaminate the results (Bagozzi et al., 1991). If present, CMB has the potential to increase or decrease observed correlations between the dependent and independent variables (Doty & Glick, 1998). This dissertation reduced potential CMB by following study design recommendations provided by Lindell and Whitney (2001), MacKenzie and Podsakoff (2012), and Podsakoff et al. (2003). First, I reminded respondents that their responses will be kept anonymous and emphasized the lack of right or wrong answers. Second, multiple scale lengths with different endpoints for survey questions were used. Third, all independent variables in the survey preceded the dependent variables and demographic information. To assess CMB post hoc, Harman's single factor test, the most frequently used method for the post-diagnosis of CMB, was done after the data was collected (Harman, 1960). In addition, I completed a full collinearity test of the model based on Variance Inflation Factors following established procedures (Kock, 2015; Kock & Lynn, 2012).

3.3 Measures

Preexisting multi-item scales that have been found to be valid and reliable in past sales research were used to measure the research constructs. Where needed, the scales

were adapted slightly in wording to fit the context of this dissertation. The goal was to create a survey that is (a) simple to read and understand, (b) acceptable to the research participants, and (c) provides valid data to analyze which will allow me to answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1. Each research participant saw the exact same questions, phrased in exactly the same way. There was no attempt to control conditions or manipulate variables. Unless otherwise noted, responses to items in the survey used a 7-point Likert scale where 1 = *Strongly Disagree* and 7 = *Strongly Agree*.

Prior to data collection, the survey instrument was pretested through personal interviews with five sales managers and five salespeople at different for-profit companies as well as by four marketing scholars. Pretesting the survey instrument is important to ensure a successful data collection by identifying and improving poorly worded questions (Iacobucci & Churchill, 2010). These practitioners and academicians evaluated the survey instrument and provided feedback about the suitability and scope of the questions for content and face validity. Since existing, well-tested measures were used, a small number of pre-testers was deemed satisfactory. The results from the pre-test were used to modify the questions asked in the survey for clarity, as needed. The survey instrument is presented in Appendix A. Approval by the Institutional Review Board to conduct the study is shown in Appendix B.

3.3.1 Coaching

Coaching was measured using the 14-item Effective Sales Coaching (ESC) scale developed by Nguyen et al. (2019). This instrument represents three dimensions: adaptability, involvement, and rapport of the sales coach. The ESC scale is the first scale

to specifically measure the effectiveness of the sales coaching process and is best suited to answer the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. Nguyen et al.'s (2019) ESC scale was developed following the methods outlined by Churchill (1979) and Nunnally (1978) as well as other scale-development studies (Walsh & Beatty, 2007). Based on in-depth interviews with B2B sales managers and salespeople from a variety of industries who have experience with coaching within the United States, Nguyen et al. (2019) identified fourteen central coaching behaviors. A confirmatory factor analysis showed excellent overall fit (CFI = 0.97, SRMR = 0.05, RMSEA = 0.06, X2/df = 1.87), the average variances extracted (AVE) of each dimension was above 0.50, and the composite reliability for each dimension was greater than 0.60 (Nguyen et al., 2019). Example items include "My manager observes me as I sell to clients," "My manager brings to my attention how I can perform better as a salesperson," and "My manager role plays with me (as buyer or seller)."

3.3.2 Coaching Modality

The modality of the coaching session was measured using a single question in which survey respondents were asked, "In the last year, were coaching sessions with your direct supervisor primarily in-person or were they primarily done remotely via e-mail/phone." An interactive slider, going from 0 = *Primarily in-Person* to 100 = *Primarily Remote,* was used to allow respondents to answer this question on a numerical scale. This slider scale question provided a more accurate reading of exactly the range that the respondents feel best represents their opinion (Roster et al., 2015).

3.3.3 Psychological Needs

SDT does not postulate that the three basic psychological needs of autonomy, self-efficacy, and relatedness should be treated as distinct constructs (Deci & Ryan, 2000). In fact, researchers have frequently considered psychological needs satisfaction as a single construct, while others have expressed them as three factors (Sheldon & Hilpert, 2012). Deci et al. (2001), Johnston & Finney (2010), and Meyer et al. (2007) all regarded needs satisfaction as a single aggregated construct in their studies. Following their lead, I treated psychological needs satisfaction as a single variable in this dissertation.

Psychological needs satisfaction was assessed using the Basic Psychological Need Satisfaction Scale – Work Domain (Deci et al., 2001; Ilardi et al., 1993; Kasser et al., 1992). This scale addresses need satisfaction in an individual's work domain. The scale consists of 21 items that are categorized into three subgroups, such that seven items measure autonomy, six items measure self-efficacy, and eight items measure relatedness. The internal reliability for the overall measure, assessed by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.89, and the subscales for autonomy, self-efficacy, and relatedness had internal reliabilities of 0.79, 0.73, and 0.84, respectively (Deci et al., 2001). Example items include "I am free to express my ideas and opinions on the job" for autonomy, "I have been able to learn interesting new skills on my job" for self-efficacy, and "I consider the people I work with to be my friends" for relatedness.

3.3.4 Intrinsic Job Motivation

Intrinsic job motivation was measured using a 6-item scale developed by Oliver and Anderson (1994). This scale measures a salesperson's inclination to participate in selling activities for intrinsic reasons related to the challenge, pleasure, feelings of

accomplishment, and feelings of usefulness. The items are intended to indicate the degree to which salespeople are motivated by rewards resulting from the job itself. Oliver and Anderson (1994) reported a coefficient alpha of 0.816 for this scale. Example items include "I don't need a reason to sell," "I sell because I want to," and "I sell because I cherish the feeling of performing a useful service." Higher scores indicate or suggest higher intrinsic job motivation. This scale focuses specifically on the sales profession and has been used in many prior research studies and has demonstrated reliability indices above 0.8 (Piercy et al., 2001).

3.3.5 Sales Creativity

Salesperson creativity was assessed with a reflective 7-item scale developed by Wang and Netemeyer (2004). Higher scores demonstrate greater amount and frequency with which salespeople provide creative solutions and engage in imaginative selling behaviors. I measured the salesperson's self-perception of their own creativity, which aligns with prior research (Coelho et al., 2011). This scale was deemed to be reliable and relevant as it has been used often in prior research studies on salespeople creativity (Bodla & Naeem, 2014; Groza et al., 2016; Martinaityte & Sacramento, 2013; Wang & Ma, 2013). This construct was measured on a 7-point Likert scale, with anchors being 1 = *Practically Never* and 7 = *Almost Always*. Salespeople were asked how often they exhibit behaviors such as, "making sales presentations in innovative ways," "carrying out sales tasks in ways that are resourceful," and "generating and evaluating multiple alternatives for novel customer problems."

3.3.6 Job Performance

The 7-item Likert scale that was used in this dissertation to measure job

performance is adapted from Behrman and Perreault (1982). Salespeople were asked to

self-evaluate themselves on various quantity and quality criteria. Asking salespeople

about their individual job performance has been demonstrated to be valid and reliable and

is a common practice in sales research (Churchill et al., 1985; Groza et al., 2016;

Micevski et al., 2019). Individuals possess the ability to evaluate themselves reliably and

in a way that can predict subsequent performance (Fox & Dinur, 1988). Van der Heijden

and Nijhof (2004) reasoned that "there is reason to believe that individuals are in a good

position to make a valid assessment of their own knowledge and capabilities" (p. 495). A

self-reported job performance measure is useful in this instance since the survey

respondents represent a variety of companies in different industries selling various

products at a wide range of prices. Survey respondents were asked to select the number

that most closely describes how honestly they are performing each activity. The scale is

anchored with 1 = *Needs Improvement* and 7 = *Outstanding*, such that a higher score

indicates better performance. Example items include "Producing a high market share for

your company," "Making sales of those products with the highest profit margins," and

"Exceeding all sales targets and objectives during the year." This measure appears to

exhibit reliability, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.90 (Robinson et al., 2005) which exceeds

the 0.70 acceptable level of reliability.

3.3.7 Demographic and Background Variables

The demographic and background variables of age, gender, education, overall

sales experience, length of employment with their organization, and tenure with

supervisor are considered extraneous variables. Age was measured using a single open-ended question in which research participants was asked to provide their birth year. Gender was measured by using a categorical question with six nominal levels (female, male, trans-gender female, trans-gender male, non-binary or non-conforming, and other) which asked participants to indicate to which gender they most identify. Those respondents who preferred not to share this information was given the option to skip this question. Educational level was coded using an ordinal scale where 1 = *Some High School*, 2 = *High School*, 3 = *Bachelor's Degree*, 4 = *Master's Degree*, 5 = *Ph.D. or higher*, 6 = *Trade School*, and 7 = *Prefer not to say*. Overall sales experience was measured using a single open-ended question in which participants were asked how much experience they have in sales. Length of employment was measured using a single open-ended question in which participants were asked how long they have been employed at their company. Tenure with supervisor was measured using a single open-ended question in which participants were asked how long they have been working for their current supervisor.

3.4 Methods

To evaluate the relationships between the independent, dependent, and moderating variables within the proposed conceptual model, partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was utilized. For the past few decades, PLS-SEM has been the predominant estimator for structural equation models and works by performing multiple regression equations and inputting their solutions (Benitez et al., 2020). PLS-SEM does not require data to be normally distributed and can be used with

smaller sample sizes vs. other SEM approaches (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., 2012). PLS-SEM is an appropriate analytical method for this research because it is a statistical technique mostly expected for the prediction-oriented objective of this dissertation (Hair et al., 2021). In addition, PLS-SEM is preferred for testing interactions because this method does not exaggerate measurement error (Chin, 2003).

The primary aim of PLS-SEM is to maximize the explained variance in a data set through definition of endogenous constructs (Hulland, 1999). Several researchers have used PLS-SEM in marketing, sales management, and organizational research (Bolander et al., 2015; Hossain & Gilbert, 2021; Inyang et al., 2018). Model evaluation with PLS-SEM is a two-stage process that involves a confirmatory composite analysis (CCA) of the measurement model and a subsequent assessment of the structural model (Sarstedt & Cheah, 2019). CCA can be conducted to analyze both reflective and formative measurement models, including those with single-item constructs (Hair et al., 2020).

I assessed the measurement model by evaluating item reliability, internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity of the main constructs (Hair et al., 2020). To analyze the structural model, and confirm the hypothesized relationships, I used path coefficients and co-efficient of determination (R^2) as the structural model's evaluation criteria (Hair et al., 2021). All analysis was conducted in SmartPLS version 3.3.7 (Ringle et al., 2015).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the statistical analysis performed using the procedures described in Chapter 3 to execute an online survey to collect data from 332 salespeople in the United States. The Prolific platform, in combination with snowball sampling where I approached salespeople I knew to recruit additional research participants, furnished qualified respondents. Chapter 4 is presented in four parts. First, characteristics of the respondents are provided. Second, an assessment of the conceptual model outlined in Chapter 2 is presented. Third, an analysis to minimize and assess CMB is summarized as well as additional post-hoc analysis. Finally, the hypothesized relationships are examined in detail.

4.1 Data Characteristics

A total of 332 respondents with complete data, considered as key informants relative to the research questions, met the research criteria. Selection criteria excluded respondents who were younger than 18, had less than one year of work experience, and were not salespeople. Respondents who met the selection criteria but did not complete the survey or failed the attention checks were removed from the sample before analysis. The data were examined to assess distribution normality and possible skewness to ensure the assumptions for parametric statistical tests were met, although the PLS-SEM method

does not require normally distributed data (Hair et al., 2020). Outliers and respondent straight liners were also identified and removed.

Two ways a researcher can verify the normality of a given data set is by checking skewness and kurtosis values. In statistics, skewness is a measure of the asymmetry of the probability distribution of a random variable about its mean where kurtosis is a measure of whether the data is heavy-tailed or light-tailed relative to that of a standard bell curve (Hair et al., 2021). For sample sizes greater than 300, "an absolute skew value larger than 2 or an absolute kurtosis (proper) larger than 7 may be used as reference values for determining substantial non-normality" (Kim, 2013, p. 53). Based on these guidelines, the model's constructs did not present any non-normality issues.

Of the respondents who completed the online survey and met the research criteria, there are 128 males (39%), 198 females (60%), and five (1%) who indicated either trans-gender female, non-binary, or non-conforming as their gender. One respondent declined to answer the gender question. The sample had a mean age of 32.4 years ($SD = 10.2$). Across all respondents, the mean company tenure is a little over four years and the mean sales experience is roughly seven years. The means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all variables in the conceptual model can be found in Table 4.1. The highest correlation is the relationship between coaching and a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction ($r = 0.56$). This indicates coaching is clearly a meaningful concept to study further. Another substantial correlation is between a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction and sales creativity ($r = 0.46$). This is not surprising because this relationship is consistent with previous findings in the sales literature.

Table 4.1. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations for Study Variables.*

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Coaching	4.42	1.21												
2. Coaching Modality	63.98	38.15	0.00											
3. Psychological Needs	5.10	0.84	0.56***	-0.05										
4. Intrinsic Job Motivation	4.54	1.08	0.24***	-0.05	0.37***									
5. Sales Creativity	3.76	0.72	0.31***	0.12*	0.46***	0.43***								
6. Job Performance	4.95	1.19	0.30***	0.05	0.35***	0.38***	0.49***							
7. Company Tenure	4.11	4.93	0.06	-0.01	0.10	0.08	0.04	0.15**						
8. Supervisor Tenure	2.34	2.65	0.09	-0.15**	0.05	0.04	-0.08	0.05	0.59***					
9. Sales Experience	7.22	7.06	0.08	0.05	0.13*	0.21***	0.14*	0.17**	0.54***	0.37***				
10. Age	32.42	10.19	0.06	0.06	0.12*	0.12*	0.05	0.06	0.52***	0.39***	0.78***			
11. Education	3.11	0.83	0.02	0.10	0.10	0.08	0.07	0.06	0.09	-0.05	0.11	0.27***		
12. Gender	1.44	0.63	0.02	0.04	-0.02	0.00	0.00	-0.05	-0.01	-0.06	0.08	0.12*	-0.00	

Notes. $N = 329$; *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

4.2 Measurement and Structural Model Assessment

PLS-SEM models are generally assessed in two stages which include an evaluation of the measurement model, also known as the outer model, and then the structural model, typically referred to as the inner model. The measurement model was evaluated following the confirmatory composite analysis (CCA) procedure (Hair et al., 2020). To do so, the item loadings and their significance, composite reliability of the constructs, average variance extracted (AVE), the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio for discriminant validity, and nomological and predictive validity of the measurement models were evaluated based on criteria recommended in the PLS-SEM literature (Hair et al., 2021). The structural model was assessed though a multi-step process that included assessing collinearity among constructs in the model, measuring significance and relevance of relationships between the variables studied, and estimating the coefficient of determination (R^2/in-sample prediction) as well as the overall out-of-sample predictive ability based on the PLSpredict procedure (Hair et al., 2021). Figure 4.1 presents the theoretical model that is evaluated in this chapter using SmartPLS.
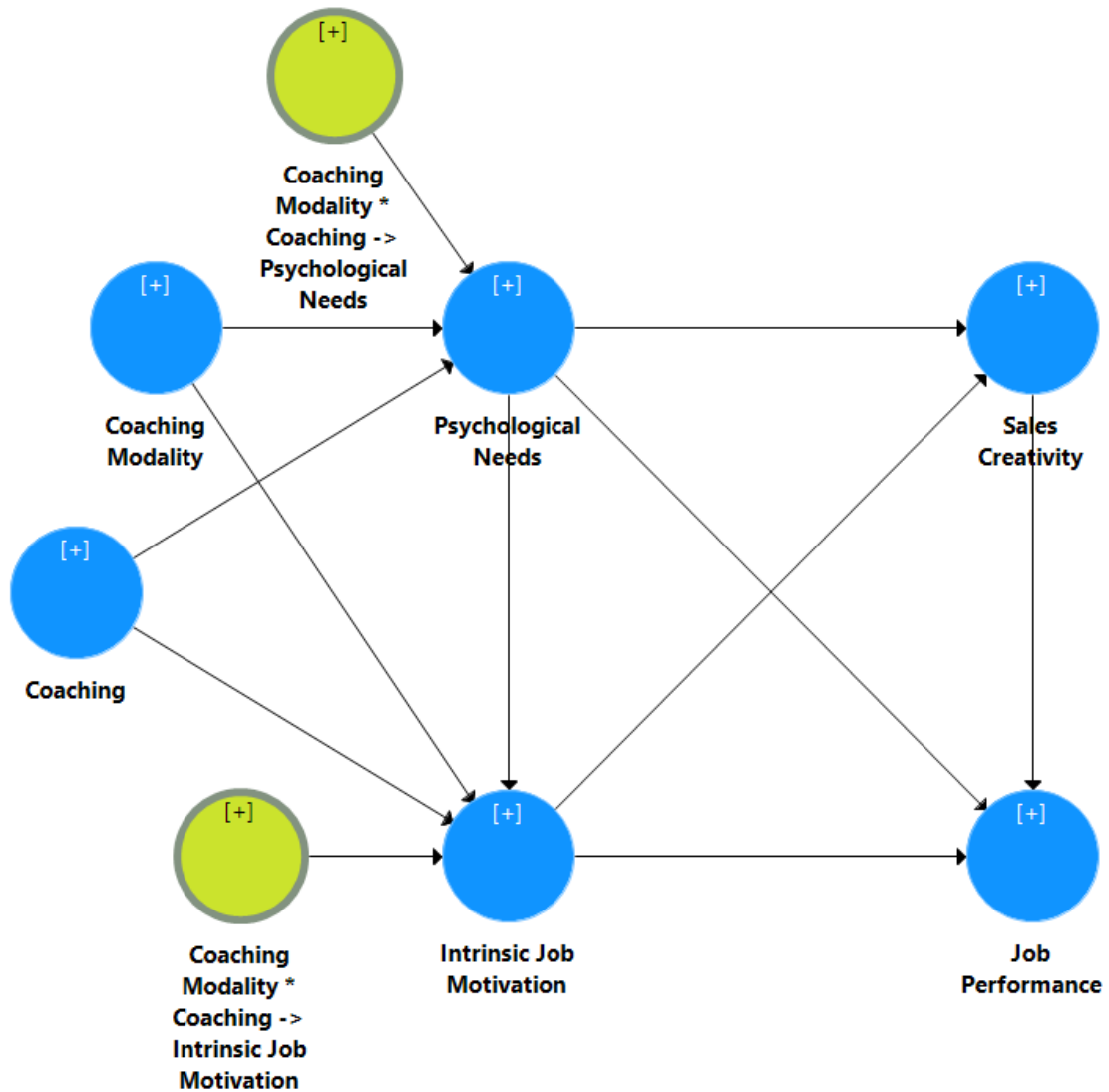
Figure 4.1. Theoretical Model of the Hypothesized Relationships between Coaching, Coaching Modality, Psychological Needs, Intrinsic Job Motivation, Sales Creativity, and Job Performance Constructs.

4.2.1 Measurement Model Evaluation

Measurement model evaluation is based on a structured process that examines the validity and reliability of the indicator variables and their relationship to the composite constructs (Hair et al., 2020). CCA executed with SmartPLS was utilized to evaluate the measurement model constructs. As recommended when using CCA with reflective

constructs, a process including assessments of item loadings and their significance, composite reliability, AVE (convergent validity), HTMT (discriminant validity), and nomological and predictive validity was employed (Hair et al., 2020).

The item loadings and their significance on their related theoretical constructs were examined first as well as indicator reliability. Table 4.2 provides the outer model analysis results. The recommended minimum for each item's loading is 0.708 since when squared, results in a minimum of 50% of the item's total variance contained in the construct (Hair et al., 2021). Each indicator variable has a loading above the recommended 0.708 level except for items ESC_involvement, CRT_1, IJM_1, IJM_3, and IJM_6. Because loadings may still be acceptable above 0.60 for exploratory research studies such as this dissertation (Hair et al., 2021), I dropped items IJM_1 and IJM_6 but retained the rest. After removing the aforementioned items, I reran the PLS Algorithm in SmartPLS to check the indicator reliability, defined as the "amount of variance shared between the individual indicator variable and its associated construct" (Hair et al., 2021, p. 104). I found the outer loadings and the indicator reliability for the remaining items had acceptable values.

Table 4.2. *Item Loadings for Coaching, Coaching Modality, Psychological Needs, Intrinsic Job Motivation, Sales Creativity, and Job Performance Constructs.*

Variable	Loadings	Variable	Loadings
Coaching		**Sales Creativity**	
ESC_adaptability	0.842	CRT_1	0.674
ESC_involvement	0.672	CRT_2	0.737
ESC_rapport	0.856	CRT_3	0.785
Coaching Modality		CRT_4	0.768
CM2	1.000	CRT_5	0.784
Psychological Needs		CRT_6	0.787
PNS_autonomy	0.866	CRT_7	0.796
PNS_competence	0.860		
PNS_relatedness	0.854	**Job Performance**	
Intrinsic Job Motivation		PERF_1	0.831
IJM_1	0.552	PERF_2	0.821
IJM_2	0.749	PERF_3	0.851
IJM_3	0.600	PERF_4	0.836
IJM_4	0.749	PERF_5	0.816
IJM_5	0.814	PERF_6	0.798
IJM_6	0.554	PERF_7	0.807

All measurement model constructs have several items, except Coaching Modality (a single item). It is important, therefore, to assess internal consistency of the items to ensure a unidimensional construct (Hair et al., 2022). Internal consistency procedures evaluate the extent that items of a common construct are intercorrelated (Nunnally, 1978). Higher levels of consistency indicate the composite scores of the items have a strong relationship with the construct (MacKenzie et al., 2011). Composite reliability was used to assess the internal consistency of each construct (Hair et al., 2021). As shown in Table 4.3, the composite reliability for each variable is above the recommended threshold of 0.70 indicating adequate reliability (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4.3. *Reliability, Convergent, and Discriminant Validity for Study Variables.*

Variable	CR	AVE	HTMT	2	3	4	5
1. Coaching	0.835	0.631					
2. Sales Creativity	0.907	0.582	0.382				
3. Coaching Modality	N/A	N/A	0.050	0.120			
4. Intrinsic Job Motivation	0.839	0.568	0.329	0.553	0.068		
5. Job Performance	0.936	0.677	0.360	0.534	0.084	0.469	
6. Psychological Needs	0.895	0.740	0.714	0.536	0.101	0.517	0.411

Notes: CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; HTMT = Heterotrait-Monotrait; N/A = Not Applicable.

Convergent validity is the extent to which the individual indicator measures correlate positively to other indicators of the same construct (Hair et al., 2021). The metric used for evaluating a construct's convergent validity is the AVE for all items associated with each construct. AVE values greater than 0.50 are desired, since this suggests that the construct score includes (explains) at least 50% of all indicator variable's variance (Hair et al., 2020). Convergent validity was assessed based on the AVEs for all constructs. As shown in Table 4.3, all AVEs exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.50. This demonstrates the constructs representing all measurement models exhibit high levels of convergent validity.

Discriminant validity assesses the extent to which constructs in the structural model differ from each other (Hair et al., 2021). A low-to-moderate correlation between constructs is considered to be evidence of discriminant validity in the measurement model (Netemeyer et al., 2003). The HTMT ratios were used to measure discriminant validity among the constructs. HTMT identifies the ratio of the between-trait correlations (shared variance between constructs) to the within-trait correlations (shared variance

within constructs) and is generally considered by researchers to be the superior way of assessing discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). As shown in Table 4.3, discriminant validity of the constructs is supported using the HTMT ratio of correlations; all ratios for each construct are below the 0.85 recommended guideline (Hair et al., 2020). Furthermore, using the percentile bootstrap approach, 95% bootstrap confidence intervals were calculated around the HTMT ratio estimates based on 5,000 bootstrap runs. The HTMT statistic confidence interval did not include a 1 for all combinations of constructs, providing further evidence that discriminant validity between constructs was adequate per HTMT criteria (Hair et al., 2020).

The final two steps of CCA are the evaluation of nomological and predictive validity (Hair et al., 2020). Nomological validity, "the degree to which predictions from a formal theoretical network containing the concept under scrutiny are confirmed" (Venkatraman, 1989, p. 951), is an additional method of evaluating construct validity. Specifically, the nomological validity of each construct can be established through demonstrating consistent strength of relationships between one or more constructs from a well-developed theoretical research stream, often referred to as the nomological network (Straub et al., 2004). The nomological validity of the constructs studied in this dissertation are supported by prior management and sales literature.

Predictive validity is another metric useful in assessing constructs. This metric evaluates "the relationship of measures of a construct to a single antecedent or consequent variable" (Venkatraman, 1989, p. 951). The primary difference between predictive and concurrent validity is that predictive validity "involves using the construct score to predict the score of a criterion variable that is collected at a later point in time"

(Hair et al., 2020, p. 105). Since data for this dissertation was only gathered once, establishing predictive relevance between the constructs was not an objective of this dissertation.

4.2.2 Structural Model Evaluation

After examining and confirming the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the next step is to evaluate the structural model. The purpose of this step is to assess the relations of the studied constructs (Hair et al., 2021). Evaluation of the inner model followed a 6-step approach which included assessing (a) multicollinearity, (b) path coefficients significance and relevance, (c) R^2 of the endogenous constructs, (d) f^2 effect sizes, (e) predictive relevance, and (f) out-of-sample predictive power according to PLSpredict (Hair et al., 2020).

First, the structural model was evaluated for multicollinearity among the independent variable constructs. High levels of multicollinearity can be problematic and introduce error when analyzing the results (Diamantopoulos & Siquaw, 2006). To test for multicollinearity, the level of the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) in each set of predictor constructs was examined. As shown in Table 4.4, the VIF for all relevant constructs are below the 3.0 threshold, therefore multicollinearity should not negatively impact the findings of this dissertation (Hair et al., 2021).

Table 4.4. *Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Statistics for Predictor Variables Sales Creativity, Coaching Modality, Intrinsic Job Motivation, Job Performance, and Psychological Needs.*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Coaching				1.519		1.035
2. Sales Creativity					1.422	
3. Coaching Modality				1.011		1.002
4. Intrinsic Job Motivation		1.202			1.348	
5. Job Performance						
6. Psychological Needs		1.202		1.491	1.355	

The next step is to evaluate the significance and relevance of the hypothesized relationships based on the size and statistical significance of the path coefficients in the structural model. The path coefficients represent the strength of each independent variable (construct) predicting the dependent variable (construct). The standardized values of the path coefficient are between -1 and +1 (Hair et al., 2021). Path coefficients with values closer to +1 indicate a strong positive relationship, whereas the inverse is true for values closer to -1. Values near zero indicate a weak relationship.

Using the SmartPLS software, bootstrapping with 5,000 samples and bias-corrected and accelerated (BCa) confidence intervals was conducted to calculate the path coefficients and significance levels of the direct relationships in the inner model (Hair et al., 2021). As shown in Table 4.5, the results from the bootstrapping analysis indicate all path coefficients were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, except for the relations between coaching and intrinsic job motivation, which has a *p* value of 0.418. One possible reason that coaching had no effect on a salesperson's intrinsic job motivation is that coaches do not directly motivate people; they foster motivation that already exists (Jimenez, 2020).

Table 4.5. *Path Coefficients, T Statistics, and P Values for Direct Effects of the Hypothesized Relationships shown in Figure 4.1.*

Hypothesized Relationship	Path Coefficients	T Statistics	P Values	Significant (< .05)
Coaching → Psychological Needs	0.573	14.787	0.000	Yes
Coaching → Intrinsic Job Motivation	0.015	0.206	0.418	No
Psychological Needs → Intrinsic Job Motivation	0.399	6.342	0.000	Yes
Psychological Needs → Sales Creativity	0.328	6.130	0.000	Yes
Psychological Needs → Job Performance	0.123	1.781	0.037	Yes
Intrinsic Job Motivation → Sales Creativity	0.321	5.962	0.000	Yes
Intrinsic Job Motivation → Job Performance	0.172	2.915	0.002	Yes
Sales Creativity → Job Performance	0.333	5.667	0.000	Yes

In addition to examining the direct effects, indirect mediated effects were also evaluated. The results are provided in Table 4.6. Since the direct relationship between coaching and a salesperson's intrinsic job motivation was not statistically significant, the proposed indirect relationships of coaching and sales creativity and coaching and job performance, mediated by intrinsic job motivation, were also not statistically significant with *p* values of 0.420 and 0.425 respectively.

Table 4.6. *Path Coefficients, T Statistics, and P Values for Indirect Effects of the Hypothesized Relationships shown in Figure 4.1.*

Hypothesized Relationships	Path Coefficients	T Statistics	P Values	Significant (< .05)
Coaching → Psychological Needs → Intrinsic Job Motivation	0.229	5.365	0.000	Yes
Coaching → Psychological Needs → Sales Creativity	0.188	5.315	0.000	Yes
Coaching → Psychological Needs → Job Performance	0.070	1.758	0.039	Yes
Coaching → Intrinsic Job Motivation → Sales Creativity	0.005	0.201	0.420	No
Coaching → Intrinsic Job Motivation → Job Performance	0.003	0.189	0.425	No
Psychological Needs → Sales Creativity → Job Performance	0.109	4.131	0.000	Yes
Intrinsic Job Motivation → Sales Creativity → Job Performance	0.107	3.969	0.000	Yes

Next, I assessed the moderating relationships proposed in Chapter 2. This involved evaluating the path coefficients and statistical significance of the moderating effect of coaching modality on two direct relationships: (a) the relationship between coaching and psychological needs, and (b) the relationship between coaching and intrinsic job motivation. As shown in Table 4.7, the moderating effect of coaching modality on coaching and psychological needs has a path coefficient of 0.010 and was not statistically significant with a *p* value of 0.423. The moderating effect of coaching modality on coaching and intrinsic job motivation has a path coefficient of -0.005 and was not statistically significant with a *p* value of 0.476.

To verify there is not a meaningful moderation of the relationships in the PLS-SEM model, the simple slope analysis was examined for each applicable hypothesis. As shown in Figures 4.2 and 4.3, the slopes are not significantly different, showing no support for the moderation effect.
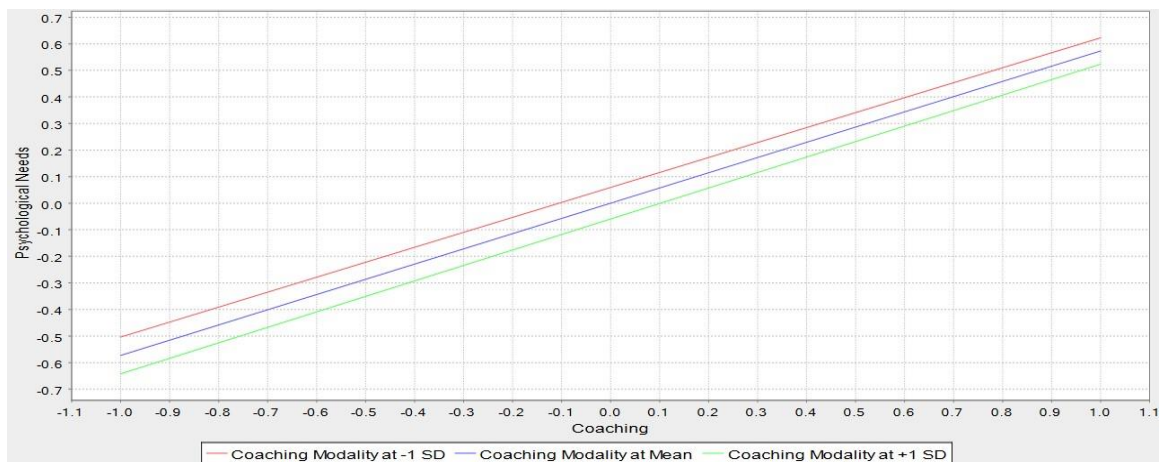
Figure 4.2. Moderation of the Relations between Coaching and Psychological Needs.
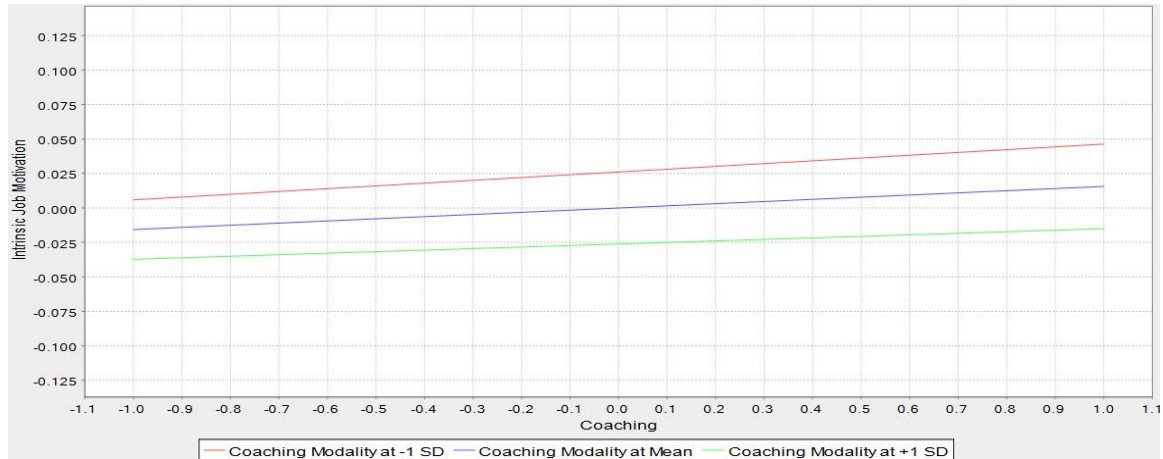
Figure 4.3. Moderation of the Relations between Coaching and Intrinsic Job Motivation.

As a final assessment of moderation, I tested each proposed moderating relationships separately by removing one or the other moderating effects. This procedure further confirmed my conclusion that neither of the relationships was significantly moderated.

Table 4.7. *Path Coefficients, T Statistics, and P Values for Moderating Effects of Hypothesized Relationships shown in Figure 4.1.*

Hypothesized Relationship	Path Coefficients	T Statistics	P Values	Significant (< .05)
Coaching Modality X Coaching → Psychological Needs	0.010	0.193	0.423	No
Coaching Modality X Coaching → Intrinsic Job Motivation	-0.005	0.060	0.476	No

I also examined the possible effect of the proposed control variables on the dependent variable job performance. Evaluating control variables helps identify whether they are influencing the dependent variable (Carlson & Wu, 2012). As outlined in Chapter 2, age, education level, sales experience, gender, tenure with supervisor, and

company tenure were identified as potential control variables. These control variables were treated as independent variables in the PLS-SEM model and their path coefficients and significance levels were examined. The results are shown in Table 4.8. The control variables of age, education level, sales experience, gender, and tenure with supervisor all had p values greater than 0.05 indicating that they did not have a meaningful effect on job performance. In contrast, company tenure was statistically significant at the 0.05 level with a path coefficient of 0.102 and a p value of 0.007, suggesting that how long a respondent worked for their company did have somewhat of a positive impact on their job performance. The likely cause is that the longer a salesperson has been at their company, the more customer relationships they have built and the more successful/higher performance the salesperson would have (Kerber & Campbell, 1987).

Table 4.8. *Path Coefficients, T Statistics, and P Values for Demographic and Background Control Variables.*

	Path Coefficients	T Statistics	P Values	Significant (< .05)
Age → Job Performance	-0.172	1.566	0.059	No
Education Level → Job Performance	0.038	0.903	0.183	No
Sales Experience → Job Performance	0.148	1.572	0.058	No
Gender → Job Performance	-0.029	0.683	0.247	No
Tenure with Supervisor → Job Performance	0.023	0.472	0.318	No
Company Tenure → Job Performance	0.102	2.451	0.007	Yes

The next two steps in evaluating the structural model are to examine the R^2 of all the endogenous variables and the f^2 effect size. The R^2 value signifies the amount of variance in a dependent variable that is explained by the independent variables; i.e., the

in-sample prediction of the structural model (Hair et al., 2021). R^2 values range from 0 to 1, with higher values increasing the predictive ability of the structural model. An acceptable level of R^2 depends on the context of the research (Hair et al., 2021). However, an R^2 value of 0.75 or above is generally considered a substantial effect, a value between 0.75 and 0.50 is generally considered a moderate effect, while a value between 0.50 and 0.25 is generally considered a weak effect, and a value below 0.25 is generally considered a very weak effect according to Hair et al. (2011).

Table 4.9 displays the R^2 values for the endogenous variables in the structural model. The values are low suggesting the model accounts for a relatively small amount of the variability observed in the data. The R^2 values, however, are similar to those reported in prior sales research examining similar theoretical relationships (Al-Adamat & Alserhan, 2020; Gammoh et al., 2014; Peesker et al., 2022; Robledo, 2018). The adjusted R^2 values in Table 4.9 indicate there is relatively little change in the values when an adjustment is made for the number of predictor variables.

Table 4.9. *Coefficients of Determination for Sales Creativity, Intrinsic Job Motivation, Job Performance, and Psychological Needs Constructs.*

	R^2	R^2 Adjusted
Sales Creativity	0.297	0.293
Intrinsic Job Motivation	0.169	0.158
Job Performance	0.286	0.280
Psychological Needs	0.329	0.323

The f^2 effect sizes of the independent variables were evaluated next. The f^2 effect size measures the contribution of a given exogenous variable on an endogenous variable (Hair et al., 2021). This evaluation reveals whether an exogenous variable that is omitted from the model has a meaningful effect on the prediction of the endogenous latent variables (Hair et al., 2021). According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, an f^2 greater than or equal to 0.02, an f^2 greater than or equal to 0.15, and an f^2 greater than or equal to 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effect sizes, respectively. Table 4.10 summarizes the f^2 effect sizes for all exogenous variables on each endogenous variable. A review of the f^2 effect size values shows that coaching has a large effect on a salesperson's psychological needs. As expected, the effect size of the non-significant relationship between coaching and intrinsic job motivation was not meaningful. The f^2 effect size values for the other variables in the model range from 0.017 to 0.129 indicating these variables have a somewhat small but meaningful effect on the dependent variables (Cohen, 1988).

Table 4.10. f^2 *Effect Sizes for all Exogenous Variables on each Endogenous Variable Studied.*

	f^2 Effect Size	Effect Size Level
Coaching → Psychological Needs	0.473	Large
Coaching → Intrinsic Job Motivation	0.000	NE
Psychological Needs → Intrinsic Job Motivation	0.129	Small
Psychological Needs → Sales Creativity	0.127	Small
Psychological Needs → Job Performance	0.017	NE
Intrinsic Job Motivation → Sales Creativity	0.122	Small
Intrinsic Job Motivation → Job Performance	0.036	Small
Sales Creativity → Job Performance	0.116	Small

Notes: NE = No effect.

The final two steps in evaluating the structural model are to examine its predictive power. The Stone-Geisser's Q^2 predictive sample reuse technique was employed to measure the structural model's predictive relevance (Geisser, 1974; Stone, 1974). The blindfolding procedure in SmartPLS was used to calculate the Q^2 value for all endogenous variables in the inner model. The blindfolding procedure applies a sample re-use technique that systematically omits each endogenous variable from the model and then over multiple iterations re-estimates the model parameters to predict the removed variable (Hair et al., 2021). Endogenous variables with Q^2 values greater than zero indicate they exhibit predictive relevance, whereas Q^2 values below zero indicate a lack of predictive relevance (Hair et al., 2021). The relative impact of the predictive relevance can be further assessed as follows: "Q^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 reveal a small, medium, or large predictive relevance of a certain latent variable, thus explaining the endogenous latent variable under evaluation" (Henseler et al., 2009, p. 305). The Q^2 values for the endogenous variables in the inner model were sales creativity (0.166), intrinsic job motivation (0.085), job performance (0.189), and psychological needs (0.237). The Q^2 values for sales creativity, job performance, and psychological needs indicate these endogenous variables have medium predictive relevance, whereas the intrinsic job motivation construct has small predictive relevance.

While R^2 values measure the model's in-sample predictive power, PLSpredict applies a procedure to assess a model's out-of-sample predictive power. Out-of-sample prediction is different from in-sample prediction (Hair & Sarstedt, 2021). The PLSpredict out-of-sample prediction assessment metrics provide a more accurate evaluation of the ability of the structural model to infer from the sample data to the population. To do so,

the PLSpredict procedure implemented in SmartPLS is "based on the concepts of

separate training and holdout samples for estimating model parameters and evaluating a

model's predictive power" (Shmueli et al., 2019, p. 2325). The algorithm performs k-fold

cross-validation on the overall dataset, where a fold is a subgroup of the total sample,

while k is the number of subgroups (Hair et al., 2021). Following the suggested

guidelines from Shmueli et al. (2019), the PLSpredict algorithm with ten folds and ten

replications was applied to the dataset to provide an out-of-sample evaluation of the

predictive model. Each indicator's root-mean-square error (RMSE) values was then

compared to the linear regression model (LM) benchmark provided in the SmartPLS

report. The majority of the error terms for each indicator in the PLS-SEM analysis were

lower than the error terms estimated from the linear regression model. Therefore, the

model has medium out-of-sample predictive power (Hair et al., 2021).

4.3 Post Hoc Analysis

Since both the dependent and independent variables for this research were

collected by a single online survey that used self-reported measures, there is potential for

CMB which can inflate or attenuate the relationships between the constructs studied,

thereby threatening the validity of the findings (Cote & Buckley, 1987). A range of a

priori approaches, outlined in Chapter 3, were used to reduce the possibility of CMB.

From a post-hoc standpoint, CMB was assessed using the Harman's single-factor test to

see if the majority of the variance in the model can be explained by a single factor as well

as by performing a full collinearity test of the PLS-SEM model based on VIFs following

Kock and Lynn's (2012) and Kock's (2015) procedure. The Harman's single-factor test

has been used in prior sales research to identify the presence of CMB (Agnihotri & Krush, 2015; Michel et al., 2015).

Based on the results of the Harman's single-factor test, the most variance accounted by one factor is 25.46% indicating that CMB is not likely contaminating the results (Babin et al., 2016; Fuller et al., 2016; Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). The full collinearity test is a technique for simultaneously assessing both vertical and lateral collinearity (Kock & Lynn, 2012) and has also been used in prior sales research to test for CMB (Inyang, 2019; Inyang et al., 2018; Singh et al., 2021). The results from the full collinearity test indicate that the PLS-SEM model was free of CMB because all the factor-level VIFs were lower than the recommended level of 3.3 as suggested by Kock (2015).

Since the data collected for this dissertation came from two different sources, a Prolific survey panel and a snowball sample, an independent samples *t*-test was calculated using the SPSS software to identify whether any significant differences exist between the means of these two groups of respondents (Christensen et al., 2014). This procedure was used to determine whether the difference between these two groups is statistically significant. The results of the Levene's test for equality of variances output indicates a majority of the variables were not significantly different at the $p > 0.05$ level (Norusis, 2005). The significances range from 0.005 to 0.495. These results demonstrate there are no meaningful differences between respondents obtained from the Prolific survey panel and the snowball sample.

4.4 Hypotheses Results

Seventeen hypotheses were examined in this dissertation to determine whether the four independent variables of coaching, salespersons' psychological needs satisfaction, intrinsic job motivation, and sales creativity are associated with the dependent variable of job performance. The results obtained by applying PLS-SEM to calculate the path coefficients and effect sizes between the model constructs are summarized in Table 4.11. The structural model, as shown in Figure 4.4, was largely successful since most hypotheses were supported by the findings.
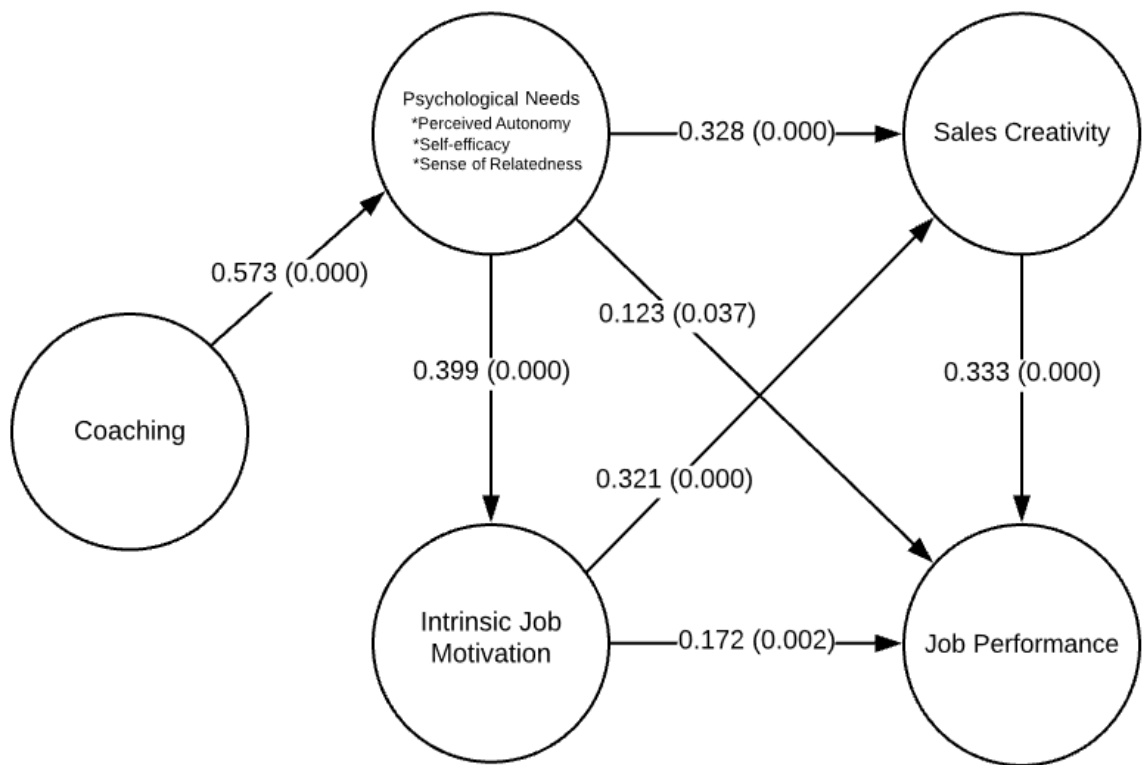
Figure 4.4. Structural Model of the Supported Hypothesized Relationships between Coaching, Psychological Needs, Intrinsic Job Motivation, Sales Creativity, and Job Performance Constructs.

Table 4.11. *Hypotheses and Findings for Relationships in the Study.*

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficients	P Values	Findings
H1a	Coaching → Psychological Needs	0.573	0.000	**Accepted**
H1b	Coaching → Intrinsic Job Motivation	0.015	0.418	Rejected
H2a	Coaching Modality X Coaching → Psychological Needs	0.010	0.423	Rejected
H2b	Coaching Modality X Coaching → Intrinsic Job Motivation	-0.005	0.476	Rejected
H3a	Psychological Needs → Intrinsic Job Motivation	0.399	0.000	**Accepted**
H3b	Psychological Needs → Sales Creativity	0.328	0.000	**Accepted**
H3c	Psychological Needs → Job Performance	0.123	0.037	**Accepted**
H4a	Coaching → Psychological Needs → Intrinsic Job Motivation	0.229	0.000	**Accepted**
H4b	Coaching → Psychological Needs → Sales Creativity	0.188	0.000	**Accepted**
H4c	Coaching → Psychological Needs → Job Performance	0.070	0.039	**Accepted**
H5a	Intrinsic Job Motivation → Sales Creativity	0.321	0.000	**Accepted**
H5b	Intrinsic Job Motivation → Job Performance	0.172	0.002	**Accepted**
H6a	Coaching → Intrinsic Job Motivation → Sales Creativity	0.005	0.420	Rejected
H6b	Coaching → Intrinsic Job Motivation → Job Performance	0.003	0.425	Rejected
H7	Sales Creativity → Job Performance	0.333	0.000	**Accepted**
H8a	Psychological Needs → Sales Creativity → Job Performance	0.109	0.000	**Accepted**
H8b	Intrinsic Job Motivation → Sales Creativity → Job Performance	0.107	0.000	**Accepted**

Hypotheses 1a and 1b propose that coaching is positively associated with the psychological needs satisfaction and intrinsic job motivation of the salesperson. H1a is accepted with a positive path coefficient of 0.573 and a *p* value of 0.000. However, there is sufficient evidence to reject H1b since the path coefficient was not significant (γ = 0.015; p = 0.418), suggesting that the coaching a salesperson receives has no impact on their intrinsic job motivation. Similarly, H2a and H2b were rejected because coaching modality did not have a significant moderating impact on the positive relationship between coaching and the psychological needs satisfaction of a salesperson (γ = 0.010; p = 0.423) or between coaching and a salesperson's intrinsic job motivation (γ = -0.005; p

= 0.476). These results indicate the modality of coaching, whether in-person or virtual, does not seem to influence the coaching experience, either positive or negative.

Hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c propose that a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction is positively related to their intrinsic job motivation, sales creativity, and job performance. The model demonstrates positive and significant relationships ($p < .05$) for H3a ($\gamma = 0.399$), H3b ($\gamma = 0.328$), and H3c ($\gamma = 0.123$). Therefore, all three hypotheses are accepted. A salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction positively mediated the effect of coaching on their intrinsic job motivation ($\gamma = 0.229$; $p = 0.000$), sales creativity ($\gamma = 0.188$; $p = 0.000$), and job performance ($\gamma = 0.070$; $p = 0.039$). Thus, hypotheses H4a, H4b, and H4c are accepted. Hypotheses 5a and 5b examine the positive relationship between a salesperson's intrinsic job motivation and their sales creativity ($\gamma = 0.321$; $p = 0.000$) and job performance ($\gamma = 0.172$; $p = 0.002$). The results indicate positive significant relationships between these constructs, which supports H5a and H5b. The indirect, positive relationships between coaching and a salesperson's sales creativity and their job performance, mediated by intrinsic job motivation are examined next. Because the direct relationship between the coaching experience and a salesperson's intrinsic job motivation is not significant, the proposed mediated relationships are also not significant and Hypotheses 6a ($\gamma = 0.005$; $p = 0.420$) and 6b ($\gamma = 0.003$; $p = 0.425$) were rejected. Hypothesis 7 predicts that a salesperson's sales creativity will have a positive effect on their sales performance. Results support this hypothesis ($\gamma = 0.333$; $p = 0.000$), therefore H7 is accepted. Finally, Hypotheses 8a and 8b contend that sales creativity will mediate the relationship between a salesperson's job performance and their psychological needs satisfaction and their intrinsic job motivation. Reasonably strong support for this

relationship was found, thus H8a ($\gamma = 0.109$; $p = 0.000$) and H8b ($\gamma = 0.107$; $p = 0.000$) are accepted.

Taken together, the results of the analysis indicate the coaching a salesperson receives does have a positive, indirect impact on their job performance answering one of the research questions outlined in Chapter 1. Coaching also has a positive, direct impact on a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction, however, coaching does not influence a salesperson's motivation to do their job answering other research questions posed in the first chapter. The final research question of whether a sales manager can effectively coach members of their sales team virtually was also answered. Neither moderating hypothesis were supported, providing no evidence that coaching modality enhances or detracts from the proposed relationships in the model. This was a bit of a surprise which will be further explored in the next chapter. The findings of this dissertation have theoretical implications and managerial relevance both of which will be discussed in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter summarizes the findings of my dissertation and is organized in four sections. First, I present a summary and general discussion of the results. Second, I examine the theoretical and managerial implications of the results. Third, I acknowledge the main limitations of my dissertation, and I and propose ideas for future research. Lastly, the final section contains my concluding observations and remarks.

5.1 Summary and Discussion of the Results

The primary objective of my dissertation was to investigate the mechanisms that influence the relations between the quality of coaching received and an individual salesperson's job performance. The secondary objective was to study the coaching interactions that salespeople have with their sales managers and whether being coached virtually had a positive or negative effect on their intrinsic job motivation and their psychological needs satisfaction. My dissertation draws on SDT to help sales scholars and practitioners alike better understand how meeting certain psychological needs, and providing a quality coaching experience, ultimately influence a salesperson's sales creativity and their job performance. The results derived from my dissertation have implications for how salespeople should be managed.

A salesperson's social network at their company, which include their sales managers, represents interpersonal social ties that facilitate the exchange of knowledge between individuals (Balkundi & Harrison, 2006). Such knowledge exchange is an essential component of learning (Huber, 1991). Furthermore, social learning allows salespeople to develop decisions and behavioral patterns based on how the people around them behave. Salespeople often decide to imitate their sales managers' behavior after being coached (Davis & Luthans, 1980). Against this background, and looking at the results provided in Chapter 4, coaching appears to provide the necessary knowledge transfer and sense of relatedness needed to satisfy a salesperson's psychological needs, ultimately unlocking better performance. In addition, through coaching (versus micromanaging) salespeople are given the autonomy needed to explore areas of improvement and the guidance to make meaningful and lasting change. However, no support was found showing that the coaching a salesperson receives has any impact on their ability to find joy in the work itself. This is somewhat surprising since intrinsically motivated salespeople are driven by their internal desire for growth, purpose, and learning and are fed through feedback and feeling valued (Miao et al., 2007), two outcomes of a quality coaching experience. One reason for this finding could be because sales managers foster the intrinsic motivation already present within the salesperson and the natural desire and drive to do the job already exists.

5.2 Theoretical and Managerial Implications

My dissertation contributes to academic literature in three ways. The first contribution is the finding that coaching is positively related to a salesperson's job

performance. This finding is supported by previous literature, such as Dahling et al. (2016), Ellinger and Bostrom (1999), and Lin et al. (2016) who identified the link between these two constructs in their research. My dissertation confirms these previous studies which is important in social science research, since replicating past study findings frequently do not reproduce the same result (Maxwell et al., 2015). The consistency in results indicates that salespeople who have quality coaching experiences with their sales managers are provided an environment where they feel motivated to learn, grow, and excel which ultimately helps facilitate them closing more deals. This outcome is relevant for practitioners as it suggests that training sales managers on how to be better coaches is important because doing so is key to long-term individual salesperson performance improvement and overall company success.

Second, the results of my dissertation validate the theoretical framework chosen to model the effect of coaching. I proposed in Chapter 2 that SDT provides a useful set of fundamental psychological needs for guiding the practice of sales coaching. One of the core tenets of SDT is that self-determined motivation is impacted by the extent to which the psychological needs of self-efficacy, autonomy, and relatedness are fulfilled or satisfied (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This theory is centered around the importance of creating an environment for employees that meets these psychological needs, thereby boosting motivation. The importance of coaching is apparent because sales managers are in a position to be able to fulfill a salesperson's needs of self-efficacy, autonomy, and relatedness. For example, sales managers can provide an environment where salespeople on their team feel in control of their own outcomes (autonomy), believe they are capable enough to constantly overcome challenging selling situations (self-efficacy), and do not

feel isolated (relatedness). The results, provided in Chapter 4, show that salespeople, thorough the coaching process, experience psychological needs satisfaction, are more motivated and engaged, resulting in improved creative selling and enhanced job performance.

The third contribution is identifying there is no moderation effect of coaching modality on the relation between coaching and a salesperson's psychological needs satisfaction. This is surprising since MNT postulates that communicating F2F is the most natural communication medium; therefore, F2F interactions should be more effective that virtual interactions (Kock, 2005). However, coaching modality did not have a positive or negative impact on the coaching experience. The coaching process is designed to help salespeople improve their job performance by emphasizing the behaviors that deliver the best outcomes, correcting poor habits early on, and helping sellers develop a method for achieving their sales goals and objectives (Mosca et al., 2010). However, since many sales teams are geographically dispersed, there is often a lack of time or there is a limited travel budget to provide quality F2F sales coaching on a frequent, ongoing basis. The results of my dissertation show that coaching virtually can be just as effective for driving sales readiness in companies across industries as coaching in-person. Coaching virtually offers a scalable solution to geographically dispersed sales teams to ensure that salespeople get the coaching they want and need so they can master the skills needed to successfully engage current and prospective customers.

Beyond the theoretical contributions, the results of my dissertation offer actionable recommendations to sales managers seeking to improve their sales team's job performance. Sales managers shape the environment for social learning, especially

considering that they are primarily responsible for clarifying to their salespeople what is expected and helping them develop the knowledge and skills necessary to perform the tasks associated with their jobs. Within the context of coaching, sales managers have significant influence on shaping their salespeople's attitudes and behaviors by serving as a role model (Rich, 1997). Sales managers also create the social environment and the circumstances of interactions between them and their salespeople (Latham & Saari, 1979). Actively creating opportunities for salespeople to build knowledge and get individualized feedback regularly so they can keep improving is the key to long-term individual and company success.

However, a sales manager's ability to be a positive motivational force though coaching may be constrained by the demands of other aspects related to their job (Robinson, 2018). Every sales manager has certain administrative activities that must be performed on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis. But how much is a sales manager contributing to the sales effort of the company through coaching if they are consistently focused on non-managing activities. Also, fostering a collaborative and trusting work climate takes valuable time and Zoltners, Sinha, and Lorimer (2014) warn that if sales managers are responsible for too many salespeople, they will not be able to spend sufficient time developing all of them. Therefore, companies should ensure that sales managers have the support and resources (e.g., time) to be effective coaches.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

I provide evidence that salespeople who have a quality coaching relationship with their sales managers reach higher levels of job performance. While I theorize that this

occurs largely because sales coaching cultivates an environment of success that empowers salespeople to feel as though they can grow in their role, contribute to company success, and take accountability for their performance, I do not take into consideration other factors that might influence this relationship such as a salesperson's sense of mindfulness or if the sales manager is a poor leader. As such, I propose that there are likely additional individual or organizational-related variables that should be studied further.

For example, over recent years the practice of mindfulness has made its way into homes and companies worldwide. Mindfulness has become so pervasive, in fact, that many major corporations have begun instituting mindfulness programs: Google, Aetna, LinkedIn, and Ford have all moved forward with corporate mindfulness initiatives in hopes of boosting productivity and employee satisfaction (Yu & Zellmer-Bruhn, 2019). Mindfulness has been defined as "a receptive attention to and awareness of present events and experiences" (Brown et al., 2007, p. 212). Mindfulness can also be viewed as a state, a trait, or a practice (Glomb et al., 2011). The individual practicing mindfulness, when exposed to aversive stimuli, chooses either to enter into a negative emotional state or they recover from the adverse experience by accepting the situation and decreasing negative thinking (Crosswell et al., 2017). As such, mindfulness involves the ability to notice and observe one's own thoughts. Mindful individuals maintain enough distance from their thoughts to view them objectively (Ruedy & Schweitzer, 2010). Because of the objective approach imparted by mindfulness, previous studies have indicated that mindfulness positively effects decision-making. This impact on decision-making can be traced to the greater awareness that the mindful individual has on their environment (Kabat-Zinn,

1994). This awareness generally encourages the consideration of all relevant information for a given decision. Thus, the mindful individual may be less likely to explain away or rationalize thoughts or ideas that may threaten the status quo.

Mindfulness has also been demonstrated to enhance salesperson job performance and lead to better sales leadership and management (Karlin, 2018). This performance enhancement has been attributed to the salesperson's, and sales manager's, ability to better manage stress, possess greater empathy, and be more resilient in adverse situations. However, how mindfulness actually influences a salesperson's job performance is unclear. Do salespeople who practice mindfulness have increased sales creativity and, in turn, close more deals? Or is there a more direct relationship? This research avenue remains ripe for exploration.

In addition to reviewing the implications of a salesperson's mindfulness on their job performance, the structure of the work and supervision should also be considered. A sales manager may be a poor coach regardless of the training and resources available to them. Or, they may have a leadership style that does not mesh well with members of their sales team. Further examination of the conditions under which coaching is most effective for salespeople would be a promising research stream that could significantly inform how companies should evolve their sales coaching programs and improve their sales manager training.

While this dissertation used data gathered from a Prolific survey panel and snowball sample, it is suggested that future studies partner with industry to survey both sales managers and salespeople to effectively explore this dyadic coaching relationship. Such a sample would further elucidate how coaching can help salespeople maximize their

potential. Partnering with industry would also allow researchers to use company provided

data to measure variables such as job performance, which would likely further mitigate

the impact of CMB.

5.4 Conclusion

This manuscript investigates the relation between sales coaching and a

salesperson's work-related attitudes and behaviors, which is an important research topic

with high managerial relevance. Using SDT, I examined how a quality coaching

relationship with one's sales manager influences a salesperson's sale creativity and job

performance. Notably, data on 332 salespeople in the United States enabled me to

measure the impact of the coaching experience objectively. Results reveal that a quality

coaching experience positively influences a salesperson's sales creativity and job

performance. Future research is proposed that recommends the exploration of other

individual and organizational factors that might influence the coaching relationship

within a sales organization.

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APPENDICES

Table A1. *Effective Sales Coaching (Nguyen et al., 2019)*

	Item	Factor
ESC_1	My manager adapts his/her coaching style to my needs and preferences	Adaptability
ESC_2	My manager communicates to me the way I prefer to be communicated	Adaptability
ESC_3	My manager manages me the way I prefer to be managed	Adaptability
ESC_4	My manager adapts to the way I like to do things	Adaptability
ESC_5	My manager observes me as I sell to clients	Involvement
ESC_6	My manager brings to my attention how I can perform better as a salesperson	Involvement
ESC_7	My manager role plays with me (as buyer or seller)	Involvement
ESC_8	My manager is involved with me in the field (i.e., sells alongside me)	Involvement
ESC_9	My manager brings to my attention what I need to improve	Involvement
ESC_10	My manager and I have a personal relationship that expands beyond the workplace	Rapport
ESC_11	I feel comfortable talking to my manager about personal (non-work related) topics	Rapport
ESC_12	My manager understands me on a personal level	Rapport
ESC_13	I can tell my manager anything	Rapport
ESC_14	My manager opens up to me	Rapport

Table A2. *Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction – Work Domain* *(Deci et al., 2001; Ilardi et al., 1993; Kasser et al., 1992)*

	Item	**Subscale**
PNS_1	I feel like I can make a lot of inputs to deciding how my job gets done	Autonomy
PNS_2	I really like the people I work with	Relatedness
PNS_3	I do not feel very competent when I am at work (R)	Competence
PNS_4	People at work tell me I am good at what I do	Competence
PNS_5	I feel pressured at work (R)	Autonomy
PNS_6	I get along with people at work	Relatedness
PNS_7	I pretty much keep to myself when I am at work (R)	Relatedness
PNS_8	I am free to express my ideas and opinions on the job	Autonomy
PNS_9	I consider the people I work with to be my friends	Relatedness
PNS_10	I have been able to learn interesting new skills on my job	Competence
PNS_11	When I am at work, I have to do what I am told (R)	Autonomy
PNS_12	Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from working	Competence
PNS_13	My feelings are taken into consideration at work	Autonomy
PNS_14	On my job I do not get much of a chance to show how capable I am (R)	Competence
PNS_15	People at work care about me	Relatedness
PNS_16	There are not many people at work that I am close to (R)	Relatedness
PNS_17	I feel like I can pretty much be myself at work	Autonomy
PNS_18	The people I work with do not seem to like me much (R)	Relatedness
PNS_19	When I am working, I often do not feel very capable (R)	Competence
PNS_20	There is not much opportunity for me to decide for myself how to go about my work (R)	Autonomy
PNS_21	People at work are pretty friendly towards me	Relatedness

Table A3. *Intrinsic Job Motivation* *(Oliver & Anderson, 1994)*

	Item
IJM_1	When I perform well, I know it's because of my own desire to achieve
IJM_2	I don't need a reason to sell; I sell because I want to
IJM_3	Becoming successful is something I want to do for me
IJM_4	If I were independently wealthy, I would still sell for the challenge of it
IJM_5	I sell because I cherish the feeling of performing a useful service
IJM_6	I wish I didn't have to retire someday so I could continue selling for the pleasure of it

Table A4. *Sales Creativity* *(Wang & Netemeyer, 2004)*

	Item
CRT_1	Making sales presentations in innovative ways
CRT_2	Carrying out sales tasks in ways that are resourceful
CRT_3	Coming up with new ideas to satisfy customer needs
CRT_4	Generating and evaluating multiple alternatives for novel customer problems
CRT_5	Having fresh perspectives on old problems
CRT_6	Improvising methods for solving a problem when an answer is not apparent
CRT_7	Generating creative selling ideas

Table A5. *Job Performance* *(Behrman & Perreault, 1982)*

	Item
PERF_1	Producing a high market share for your company
PERF_2	Making sales of those products with the highest profit margins
PERF_3	Generating a high level of dollar sales
PERF_4	Quickly generating sales of new company products/services
PERF_5	Identifying and selling to major accounts
PERF_6	Producing sales or blanket contracts with long-term profitability
PERF_7	Exceeding all sales targets and objectives during the year

Appendix B

IRB Approval—Sales Coaching

From: IRB Administration
Sent: Thursday, October 7, 2021 11:30 AM
To: Emory Serviss
Cc: Christopher Hopkins
Subject: Serviss Approval Exempt Protocol #21-467 EX 2110, "Sales Coaching"
Attachments: Investigators Responsibilities rev 1-2011.docx; Serviss 21-467 EX 2110 New Revisions.pdf

Use *IRBsubmit@auburn.edu for protocol related submissions and IRBadmin@auburn.edu for questions and information.*
The IRB only accepts forms posted at https://cws.auburn.edu/vpr/compliance/humansubjects/?Forms and submitted electronically.

Dear Dr. Serviss,

Your protocol titled " Sales Coaching" was approved by the AU IRB as "Exempt" under federal regulation 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

:

This e-mail serves as notice the protocol has been approved. By accepting this approval, you also accept your responsibilities associated with this approval. Details of your responsibilities are attached. Please print and retain.

Information Letter:
A copy of your approved protocol is attached. However you still need *to add the following IRB approval information to your information letter(s):* "**The Auburn University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from October 5, 2021 to ------- Protocol #21-467 EX 2110, Serviss**"

You must use the updated document(s) to consent participants.

Expiration:
Continuing review of this Exempt protocol is not required; however, all modification/revisions to the approved protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB.

When you have completed all research activities, have no plans to collect additional data and have destroyed all identifiable information as approved by the IRB, notify Office of the IRB via e-mail. A final report is **not** required for Exempt protocols.

PLEASE NOTE: If any unfunded, IRB-approved study should later receive funding, you must submit a MODIFICATION REQUEST for IRB review. In the request, identify the funding source/sponsor and AU OSP number. Also, revise IRB-stamped consent documents to include the Sponsor at the top of page 1 and the "Who will see study data?" section of consent documents. (see online template consent documents).

Best wishes for success with your research!

IRB Admin
Office of Research Compliance
Auburn University
115 Ramsay Hall
Auburn, AL 36849

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Name of Author: Emory R. Serviss

Graduate and Undergraduate Schools Attended:

      University of South Alabama, Mobile, Alabama

      University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, Alabama

      Jacksonville State University, Jacksonville, Alabama

Degrees Awarded:

      Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration, 2022, Mobile, Alabama

      Master of Business Administration, 1996, Birmingham, Alabama

      Bachelor of Science in Marketing and Management, 1995, Jacksonville, Alabama

Publications:

Howard, M. C., & Serviss, E. (2022) The antecedents and outcomes of corporate

      volunteering: an employee-and organizational-level meta-analysis. *Journal of*

      Managerial Psychology, 37(2), 93-110.

Serviss, E. (2021). What's ethics got to do with it? Manager behavioral modeling in

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