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Managerial latitude and adaptive selling: Important roles of salesperson perceived control and work centrality

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ABSTRACT

Based on the Conservation of Resources theory, we propose a positive relationship between managerial latitude and salespeople's adaptive-selling behavior. We also propose salesperson perceived control as a relevant mediator and salesperson work centrality as an important boundary condition. Using time-lagged (three rounds, two months apart) data from 321 sales manager-employee dyads, the present work shows that managerial latitude positively influences adaptive selling, both directly and indirectly, via salesperson perceived control. Furthermore, our findings demonstrate that salesperson work centrality functions as a moderator of the direct association between managerial latitude and perceived control, as well as in the indirect link between managerial latitude and adaptive selling. The present study carries several important practical implications for organizations operating in different service and manufacturing sectors.

1. Introduction

Due to continuing market developments, intensifying rivalry, and rising customer expectations and customer awareness, organizations are increasingly being forced to assess and modify how they provide value to their customers (Rapp et al., 2015; Singh & Venugopal, 2015). Certainly, there is no single best sales approach, but rather, salespeople make changes in their sales strategy to complete the transaction in the organization's favor (Paparoidamis & Guenzi, 2009; Rapp et al., 2015; Román & Iacobucci, 2010). Studies suggest that providing superior value to customers and increasing their satisfaction are mainly dependent on salespeople's ability to comprehend customers' varying needs and effectively change the sales strategy to meet such expectations (Kimura et al., 2019). Consequently, adaptive selling, defined as a salesperson's ability to adjust their sales strategy according to customers' diverse demands (Spiro & Weitz, 1990), has become relevant and received significant attention in previous studies (Kalra et al., 2017; Kwak et al., 2019; Yoo & Arnold, 2019). Adaptive selling leads to various positive outcomes, such as perceived value (Yoo & Arnold,

2019), customer loyalty (Román & Iacobucci, 2010), customer satisfaction, and customers' positive behavioral intentions (Kalra et al., 2017; Kimura et al., 2019; Kwak et al., 2019). Previous literature has also brought to the fore different antecedents of adapting selling that include leadership (Wong, Liu, & Tjosvold, 2015; Tuan & Ngan, 2021), salespeople's customer orientation (Gengler et al., 1995; Kaynak et al., 2016), perspective taking (Limbu et al., 2016), self-leadership skills (Alnakhli et al., 2020), and cultural intelligence (Chen & Jaramillo, 2014).

Despite being insightful, previous studies have overlooked the role of managerial latitude in shaping salespeople's adaptive-selling behavior. This omission is surprising, as such latitude encourages cooperation and freedom that lead to improved job performance and creativity (Liden & Graen, 1980). It positively influences employee well-being (Warr, 1990) and plays a critical role in enhancing their competencies and loyalty (DelVecchio, 1998). Managerial latitude mitigates the problems associated with sales transactions, thus improving the customers' evaluation of the organization's products (Bridoux & Vishwanathan, 2020). Moreover, it allows salespeople to engage in flexible behaviors, while

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interacting with buyers, leading to customers' satisfaction and the achievement of sales goals (Thompson & Prottas, 2006). As such, we argue that managerial latitude has considerable theoretical relevance in developing salesperson adaptive-selling behaviors. Hence, overlooking the link between managerial latitude and adaptive selling risks ignoring an important determinant of the latter.

To fill in this gap, building on the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989), we propose that managerial latitude is positively associated with salesperson adaptive-selling behavior. Further, COR theory suggests that contextual resources (e.g., managerial latitude) provide employees with essential personal resources (e.g., a sense of control over their work, autonomy, and motivation) that we argue lead to salesperson adaptive-selling behavior. In line with this proposition of COR theory, our model integrates salesperson perceived control as a mechanism underlying the managerial latitude-adaptive selling link to explain why the former positively influences the latter. We focus on salesperson perceived control, because it leads to several positive outcomes, including job performance and employee competence (Brashear et al., 2005; McNeilly & Lawson, 1999). It assists individuals in dealing with various challenges and complex situations (Brashear et al., 2005), while at the same time facilitating creativity (McNeilly & Lawson, 1999). Importantly, employees' sense of control over work improves their focus on and adaptability to challenging situations (Lopez & McMillan-Capehart, 2009). Thus, we contend that salespeople's perceived control is of theoretical significance for their adaptive selling behavior and carries useful practical implications.

Finally, COR theory suggests that individuals with more personal resources have a better ability to exploit contextual resources (e.g., managerial latitude) and add more resources to their personal resource reservoir (Hobfoll et al., 2018). This premise of the COR theory indicates that the impact of managerial latitude on adaptive selling is contingent on the level of salespeople's personal resources. To identify when managerial latitude is more effective in enhancing salesperson adaptive-selling behaviors, we propose work centrality as a contingent factor on the direct association between managerial latitude and salesperson perceived control, as well as the indirect association between managerial latitude and adaptive selling. Work centrality is understood in the present study as an individual's belief concerning the degree of significance of work in their life (Paullay et al., 1994). Salesperson work centrality has been considered here, as it positively influences work commitments and encourages individuals to achieve high standards in their work roles (Paullay et al., 1994; Hirschfeld & Field, 2000). Compared to others, individuals with high work centrality demonstrate higher levels of enthusiasm, determination, and interest in their work activities (Bal & Kooij, 2011; Diefendorff et al., 2002). Consequently, they possess a better ability to enroll various social and financial resources in their work-related activities (Wong & Boh, 2014). As such, we argue that salespeople with high work centrality can better exploit contextual resources, such as freedom and autonomy provided by managerial latitude and they develop stronger perceptions of control over their work activities. Thus, we infer that work centrality can have significant implications for the influence of managerial latitude on salespeople's personal resources (e.g., perceived control), as well as their engagement in adaptive-selling behaviors.

Our study makes four contributions to the literature. First, we show managerial latitude as an important predictor of adaptive selling, thus adding to the scarce literature on managerial latitude (Liden & Graen, 1980; DelVecchio, 1998) and extending the nomological network of the antecedents of adaptive selling (Alnakhi et al., 2020; Kaynak et al., 2016). Second, by demonstrating salesperson perceived control as a relevant mechanism explaining why managerial latitude impacts adaptive selling, we contribute to the literature on salesperson perceived control (e.g., Brashear et al., 2005; McNeilly & Lawson, 1999), which has received scarce attention in the literature on adaptive selling. Finally, while existing literature has shown that work centrality leads to favorable consequences, such as job performance and intrapreneurial

behaviors (Bal & Kooij, 2011; Usman et al., 2021), this important construct has been glossed over in the sales context. Our research makes noteworthy contributions to the scarce pool of studies on work centrality (Ali et al., 2022; Diefendorff et al., 2002) by foregrounding salesperson work centrality as a valuable contingent factor that explicates when managerial latitude is more effective in developing salespeople's perceived control and adaptive-selling behavior. Fig. 1 depicts our proposed model.

The rest of this research paper is structured as follows. The second section presents the theory and hypotheses. The third explains the research methods adopted, including data collection procedures and analysis techniques. In the fourth section, results are presented. Finally, in the fifth section, the findings of this research are discussed, with the theoretical contributions, practical implications, and limitations being highlighted.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1. COR theory

COR theory suggests that people try to attain and preserve valued resources (e.g., attributes, energy, conditions, and objects) that help individuals to take control and handle external demands (e.g., diverse customers' complaints and demands). Resources possess either inherent value or function as a conduit for acquiring valued ends (Hobfoll, 1989). For the present work, we have focused mainly on two broad categories of resources – contextual/condition resources and personal ones. Contextual/condition resources refer to the characteristics of the work environment or external conditions that influence individuals' resources. Whilst contextual resources are external to individuals, they play a significant role in facilitating the acquisition, maintenance, and protection of individuals' personal resources. Examples of such resources include supportive organizational climate, leadership support, peer support, work flexibility, and job design factors, such as responsibility and job autonomy. Personal resources are specific to individuals and are based on their personal characteristics, beliefs, attitudes, and capabilities. Self-efficacy, self-esteem, optimism, knowledge, skills, psychological capital, and perceptions of control over the work and its context are examples of personal resources.

We have used COR theory, notably the resource investment/loss principle, to develop our hypotheses. This theory suggests that employees' work-related behaviors are mainly driven by their need to protect their resource reservoirs, accumulate more resources, and avoid the loss of resources (Hobfoll, 1989). Further, there is a dynamic interplay of resources, such that those from one domain (e.g., context) exhibit close connections to resources in other domains (e.g., personal domain). Consequently, changes in resource acquisition or depletion within one domain have an impact on resource dynamics in other domains (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Moreover, individuals with more personal resources are more resilient to resource loss and possess a greater ability to acquire additional ones. In contrast, those who have limited resources are more susceptible to resource depletion and face challenges in acquiring further resources.

2.2. Managerial latitude and adaptive selling

Liden and Graen (1980) define managerial latitude as the amount of freedom and autonomy provided by managers to employees. It encourages employees to seek out new opportunities, engage in creative and innovative behaviors, and exhibit responsiveness (DelVecchio, 1996). Indeed, salespeople prefer a managerial style characterized by freedom and autonomy, because such a managerial style offers them space to develop and tailor their sales strategies to meet customers' varying needs (Hite & Bellizzi, 1986). Further, by offering freedom and autonomy to employees, managers exhibit a sense of trust and confidence in employees' skills and decision-making abilities (Hite & Bellizzi,

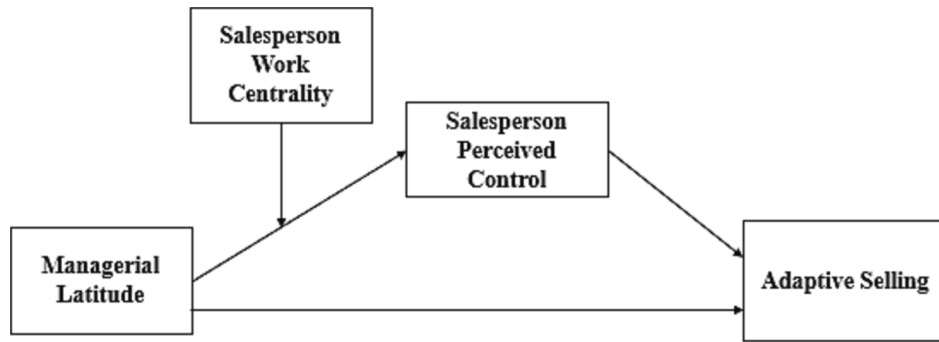


Fig. 1. The proposed model.

1986; DelVecchio, 1996). Managers' confidence in employees' skills and decision-making abilities predicts salesperson adaptive-selling behaviors (Locander et al., 2014; McFarland, 2019). Studies also suggest that managerial latitude gives employees leverage to configure their actions in a range of different ways (Bridoux & Vishwanathan, 2020). As such, we infer that salespeople working under the supervision of sales managers who offer them freedom and autonomy may enable them to modify their behaviors to meet customers' diverse demands.

Proceeding further, COR theory proposes that resources in various domains are closely linked, resources in the contextual domain (e.g., managerial latitude) increase employees' resources in their personal domain. The theory also posits that employees allocate their resources to activities in which they anticipate future resource gains. Based on these premises, we understand that as a contextual resource, managerial latitude improves salespeople's personal resources, such as skills, motivation, and energy. Moreover, since adaptive-selling behaviors can enhance salespeople's resources in the form of job satisfaction, self-esteem, and job performance, we contend that they may spend their personal resources, for example, skills, motivation, and energy, to proactively interact with customers to understand their varying demands and tailor their sales presentations, accordingly, to ultimately enhance their gains (e.g., job satisfaction, job performance, and self-esteem). Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1. Managerial latitude is positively associated with salesperson adaptive-selling behavior.

2.3. Salesperson perceived control as a mediator

Salesperson perceived control refers to a salesperson's belief in their ability to carry out necessary actions required to manage and control a situation (Uhrich, 2011). A work environment that limits or impedes employees' goal achievement results in their having perceptions of a loss of control (Ward & Barnes, 2001; Usman et al., 2022). Conversely, a work environment that is socially dense and encourages cooperation and consultation engenders salespeople's perceptions of control (Ali et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2023; Lu et al., 2023; Uhrich, 2011; Usman et al., 2023). Managerial latitude allows for the development of a supportive work environment, giving salespeople the freedom to make autonomous decisions and determine different appropriate sales strategies (Bridoux & Vishwanathan, 2020). As stated before, COR theory posits that contextual resources, for example, a supportive work environment and leadership support, positively contribute to individuals' personal resources. Seen through the lens of COR theory, managerial latitude provides salespeople with several crucial contextual resources, such as a supportive work environment and freedom, which are important determinants of salesperson perceived control (Uhrich, 2011). Previous studies have also suggested that autonomy and freedom (the key definitional constructs of managerial latitude) shape salespeople's perceptions of control (DelVecchio, 1998; Thompson & Protta, 2006). Moreover, sales manager support is one of the key factors that enhances

salespeople's perceptions of control over the events (Kemp et al., 2013; DelVecchio, 1996). Thus, based on COR theory, we propose that managerial latitude as a contextual resource enhances salespeople's perceptions of control (an important personal resource) over their sales-related activities and events. As such, we expect a positive association between managerial latitude and salespeople's perceptions of control.

Furthermore, the perceptions of control over work provide employees with several resources, such as energy, motivation, a sense of mastery, and feelings of competence and self-efficacy (Stevens et al., 1993; Zellars et al., 2008). According to COR theory, individuals allocate their resources to activities that improve their resource reserves. Consistent with this tenant of COR theory, we argue that salespeople who perceive that they have control over their work activities actively invest their resources (e.g., energy, motivation, a sense of mastery, and feelings of competence) in adaptive-selling behaviors to further increase their resources (e.g., sales performance, self-esteem, and job satisfaction). As such, it is inferred that salesperson perceived control enhances their engagement in adaptive-selling behaviors. Our proposition is in line with past research (e.g., DelVecchio, 1996), suggesting that when salespeople perceive that they are in control of their work activities, they take risks to make necessary changes in their sales strategy. Thus, we contend that salesperson perceived control leads to adaptive-selling behavior. Based on the above arguments, the subsequent hypothesis is developed.

H2. Salesperson perceived control mediates the relationship between managerial latitude and adaptive selling.

2.4. Work centrality as a moderator

COR theory posits that the impact of contextual resources on employees' personal resources is not uniform; instead, people with better personal resource reserves exhibit an enhanced ability to take advantage of contextual resources (e.g., managerial latitude). Thus, we argue that salespeople's personal resources (e.g., work centrality) can make a difference in the effectiveness of managerial latitude. Work centrality is an important determinant of numerous positive consequences, including employee performance, work involvement, job satisfaction, and extra-role behavior (Kanungo, 1982; Kalleberg & Mastekaasa, 2001; Usman et al., 2021). Further, work centrality negatively affects employee turnover and absenteeism (Snir & Harpaz, 2002). People with high work centrality exhibit a stronger identification with work and view it as the most important part of their lives (Hirschfeld & Field, 2000). Thus, compared to others, employees with higher levels of work centrality exert extra effort (Sharabi & Harpaz, 2007) and endeavor more to excel in their professional roles (Ali et al., 2022).

Employees with higher levels of work centrality intend to accomplish more in their work role and thus, are more determined, engaged, confident, and empowered (Ali et al., 2022; Diefendorff et al., 2002). Work centrality enables individuals to secure key positions at work, thereby enhancing their access to various precious resources (Paullay

et al., 1994). Accordingly, in comparison to others, employees high on work centrality acquire more benefits from contextual resources, such as support in the form of feedback and guidance from managers as well as other important informational and financial resources (Ali et al., 2022; Diefendorf et al., 2002; Hirschfeld & Field, 2000) that may enhance their sense of control. Thus, it is argued that salespeople with high work centrality tend to get more benefits from contextual resources. As a result, they acquire greater levels of perceived control. In other words, work centrality strengthens the influence of managerial latitude on salesperson perceived control.

Indeed, our argument that work centrality strengthens the influence of managerial latitude on salesperson perceived control is aligned with the following premises of COR theory. It posits that resources within a particular setting, such as contextual ones, enrich resources in different settings, for instance, individual resources. Additionally, COR theory posits that the increase in resources is not the same for all, but rather, people with more resources have superior ability and skills to get benefit from the contextual resources and thus, increase their current resource base. Therefore, based on COR theory, we contend that compared to others, salespeople with high work centrality (an individual resource) tend to gain more from managerial latitude (a contextual resource) and demonstrate a better ability to improve their sense of control over different work-related activities (an important individual resource). Following the above discussion, we postulate the following hypothesis.

H3: *Salesperson work centrality moderates the positive relationship between managerial latitude and salesperson perceived control, such that the relationship is strong when work centrality is high (vs. low).*

As noted previously (H2), managerial latitude positively affects salesperson perceived control, which, in turn, serves as a motivating factor for salespeople to exhibit adaptive-selling behavior. In other words, the effect of managerial latitude on adaptive selling is translated through salesperson control. Additionally, COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) suggests that individuals with more personal resources derive greater advantages from contextual resources. Therefore, we argued above (H3), compared to others, individuals with high work centrality aim to perform more strongly in their work role and hence, they are more determined and confident (Diefendorff et al., 2002; Hirschfeld & Field, 2000; Usman et al., 2021). As a result, salespeople with high work centrality are more capable of exploiting managerial latitude that may enhance their sense of control, which, in turn, helps them make more effective changes in their sales strategy (DelVecchio, 1996). Thus, it is contended that the indirect positive association between managerial latitude and adaptive selling, via salesperson perceived control, is strong for salespeople with high (vs. low) work centrality. From this, it can be inferred that high (vs. low) salesperson work centrality can reinforce the indirect (via salesperson perceived control) link of managerial latitude with adaptive selling. Viewed statistically, this represents a moderated-mediation case (Hayes, 2015), whereby salesperson work centrality interacts with managerial latitude to have an indirect influence on salesperson adaptive-selling behavior, via salesperson perceived control. Hence, the following hypothesis is postulated.

H4: *Salesperson work centrality moderates the indirect (via salesperson perceived control) relationship between managerial latitude and salesperson adaptive-selling behavior, such that the relationship is strong when work centrality is high (vs. low).*

3. Methods

Survey data collected at different time intervals were gathered from 321 sales manager-salesperson dyads in different manufacturing and service sector firms operating in one of the Indian Subcontinent countries. The Indian Subcontinent countries offer a big and attractive market for various types of business organizations. India alone is one of the largest economies in Asia (Pulicherla et al., 2022). The retail and sales

industry is deemed a key economic pillar for the growth of the Indian economy, and these sectors attract huge investments each year (Agnihotri & Krush, 2015). Further, the retail and sales industry has the potential to become the largest growing sector in India over the next few years (RM et al., 2019; Singh & Koshy, 2011). Therefore, there is intense competition in this emerging market due to the large market size and high investments (Agnihotri & Krush, 2015; Singh & Das, 2013). Certainly, it has become more difficult to remain competitive than ever before in emerging markets (Pulicherla et al., 2022). Therefore, salespeople need to be more knowledgeable and flexible in their sales strategy to better deal with the competition (Purani & Sahadev, 2008; RM et al., 2019). Salespeople's adaptive-selling behavior can help organizations stay competitive because such behaviors help salespeople understand and meet customers' unique needs and expectations through creative and flexible offerings (Singh & Das, 2013). Adaptive selling techniques assist salespeople in achieving higher sales output and organizational sales objectives (RM et al., 2019). As such, we understand that the Indian Subcontinent countries offer an interesting context for studying adaptive selling.

To collect data, initially, a total of 800 alumni (working as sales managers) of a university were contacted. Of the initially contacted, 434 alumni agreed to participate in the survey and provided us with lists of salespeople working under their supervision. Then we emailed them cover letters containing brief information about the general purpose of the study and the confidentiality promise. We also requested sales managers to provide the list of salespeople working under their supervision. We randomly chose one salesperson from each of the lists provided to us. At time 1, we received 388 salespeople's responses about managerial latitude, salesperson work centrality, and their demographics. After two months, at time 2, we received 362 salespeople's responses about perceived control. Finally, at time 3, we contacted 362 sales managers, whose subordinates had responded in the first two rounds. We received 330 sales managers' responses about their subordinates' adaptive-selling behavior. After matching the data using unique codes and carefully screening for missing values and attention checks, we retained 321 responses.

To address the issue of common method variance, data were gathered from two different sources. Likewise, the time-lagged design also helps counter common method bias. Our sample consisted of 48.9 % females and 51.1 % males. Moreover, 32.1 % of respondents had completed an intermediate certificate (12 years of schooling), while 32.4 % and 35.5 % had completed undergraduate and master's degrees, respectively. The average age of the respondents was 37 years, and the average tenure of the respondents was 3.25 years. Structural equation modeling was employed in Mplus (8.8) to analyze the data.

3.1. Control variables

Past research suggests that age, gender, education, and tenure can impact salesperson adaptive-selling behavior (Alnakhli et al., 2020; Charoensukmongkol & Suthatorn, 2020; Locander et al., 2020) and thus, we controlled for these demographics.

3.2. Measures and variables

All the variables were measured on five-point Likert scales anchored on 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Managerial latitude. Managerial latitude was assessed by adapting Liden and Graen's (1980) four-item scale ($\alpha = 0.88$). A sample item: "My sales manager is open to my suggestions regarding changes in my sales responsibilities".

Salesperson perceived control. Salesperson perceived control was assessed using a ten-item scale ($\alpha = 0.89$) developed by Spreitzer (1995). A sample item: "I have a lot of freedom in planning my job".

Adaptive selling. Adaptive selling was assessed by adapting a five-item scale ($\alpha = 0.90$) from Robinson et al. (2002). A sample item: "He/she is

flexible in the selling approach he/she uses”.

Salesperson work centrality. Salesperson work centrality was assessed using a three-item scale ($\alpha = 0.77$) from Bal and Kooij (2011). A sample item: “The major satisfaction in my life comes from my job”.

4. Results

4.1. Means and correlations

Means, correlations, and standard deviations are presented in Table 1.

4.2. Measurement model

We assessed the measurement model consisting of managerial latitude, salesperson perceived control, work centrality, and adaptive selling using confirmatory factor analysis. All the items demonstrated significant loading ($p < .01$). Moreover, the values of various fit indices – $\chi^2(203) = 497.92$, $\chi^2/df = 2.45$, RMSEA = 0.07, CFI = 0.91, and TLI = 0.90 – showed a good fit of the measurement model with the data.

Further, as presented in Table 2, for all the variables, average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded 0.50. Likewise, the square root of AVE of all the variables exceeded the respective inter-construct correlations. Further, AVE values were greater than average shared variance (ASV) and maximum shared variance (MSV). Hence, it is concluded that the measures used in the present work exhibited satisfactory levels of convergent validity, as well as discriminant validity.

4.3. Direct and indirect effects and the moderation results

The results showed that managerial latitude was positively associated with salesperson adaptive-selling behavior ($B = 0.33$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < .01$) (Table 3). Moreover, the indirect association between managerial latitude and salesperson adaptive-selling behavior, via salesperson perceived control was significant ($B = 0.05$, $SE = 0.02$, $p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis 1 and hypothesis 2 were supported.

We added the interaction term of salesperson work centrality and managerial latitude to the indirect effects model to test the conditional effect hypotheses 3 and 4. As presented in Table 3, the influence of the interaction between salesperson work centrality and managerial latitude was significant ($B = 0.23$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < .01$). Simple slope plots (Fig. 2) depict the precise nature of these conditional effects by presenting the conditional values of the association of managerial latitude with salesperson perceived control at low work centrality and high work centrality. For high work centrality, the influence of managerial latitude on salesperson perceived control was significant ($B = 0.57$, $SE = 0.07$, $p < .01$). On the contrary, for low salesperson work centrality, the influence of managerial latitude on salesperson perceived control was insignificant ($B = 0.02$, $SE = 0.06$, ns). Therefore, we found support for hypothesis 3.

Finally, the moderated-mediation results revealed that for high salesperson work centrality, the indirect influence of managerial latitude on adaptive selling via salesperson perceived control was

Table 1
Means and correlations.

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Managerial latitude	3.05	1.12							
2. Salesperson control	3.16	1.04	0.32**						
3. Adaptive selling	3.15	1.00	0.37**	0.27**					
4. Work centrality	3.16	1.19	0.14*	0.05	0.05				
5. Age	37.08	7.67	-0.08	-0.03	-0.02	-0.04			
6. Gender			-0.04	-0.02	-0.09	0.08	-0.13*		
7. Education			0.09	0.01	-0.03	-0.02	-0.02	0.11	
8. Tenure	3.25	1.57	0.04	0.03	0.09	0.03	0.02	0.05	0.06

Notes. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Sample size (N) = 321.

Table 2
Discriminant validity and convergent validity.

Construct	1	2	3	4	AVE	MSV	ASV
1. Managerial latitude	0.72				0.52	0.19	0.12
2. Salesperson control	0.37	0.72			0.52	0.14	0.08
3. Adaptive selling	0.44	0.30	0.79		0.62	0.19	0.10
4. Work centrality	0.17	0.07	0.07	0.73	0.53	0.03	0.01

Notes. N = 321. AVE = Average variance extracted. MSV = Maximum shared variance. ASV = Average shared variance. Bolded values on the diagonals of columns 2 to 5 are the square root values of AVE. Other than bolded valued (column 2 to 4) are inter-construct correlations.

Table 3
Hypotheses results without control.

Total effect	B	SE
Managerial latitude → Adaptive selling	0.33**	0.05
Direct paths		
Managerial latitude → Adaptive selling	0.28**	0.05
Managerial latitude → Salesperson control	0.29**	0.05
Salesperson control → Adaptive selling	0.16**	0.05
Indirect path		
Managerial latitude → Salesperson control → Adaptive selling	0.05**	0.02
Direct moderated path: Work centrality as a moderator		
Managerial latitude*Work centrality → Salesperson control	0.23**	0.04
Effect of managerial latitude on salesperson control (high work centrality)	0.57**	0.07
Effect of managerial latitude on salesperson control (low work centrality)	0.02	0.06
Indirect moderated path: Work centrality as a moderator		
Indirect effect of managerial latitude on adaptive selling (high work centrality)	0.09**	0.03
Indirect effect of managerial latitude on adaptive selling (low work centrality)	0.00	0.01
Managerial latitude*Work centrality → Salesperson control → Adaptive selling	0.04**	0.01

Notes: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. Sample size (N) = 321 (bootstrapping by specifying a sample of size 5,000).

significant ($B = 0.09$, $SE = 0.03$, $p < .01$). Contrary to it, for low salesperson work centrality, the indirect influence of managerial latitude on adaptive selling was insignificant ($B = 0.00$, $SE = 0.01$, ns). The index of the conditional indirect effect of managerial latitude on adaptive selling was also significant ($index = 0.04$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .01$). Thus, hypothesis 4 was also supported.

To test the robustness of our model, we also tested the model with controls. We did not find any significant difference between the results with and without controls. The results with controls are presented in Table 4.

5. Discussion and theoretical contributions

Drawing mainly on COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989) and collecting data from 321 sales managers-salesperson dyads, the findings of the present study reveal that managerial latitude is positively associated with

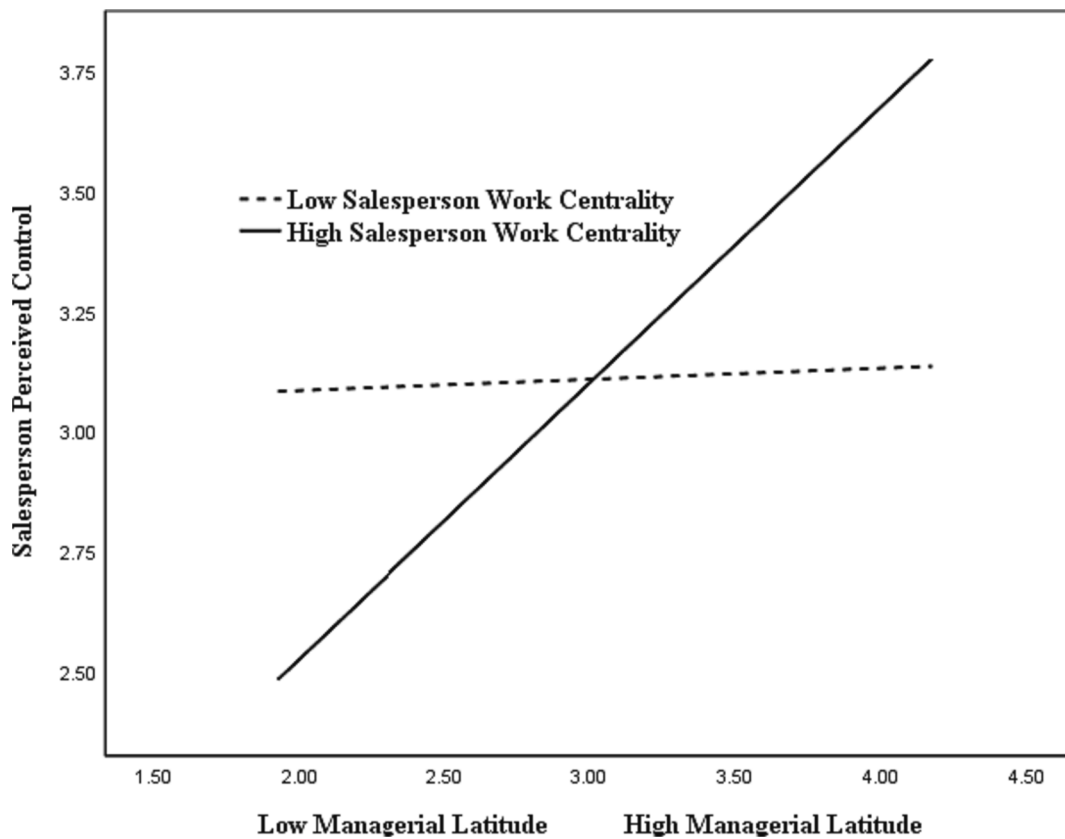


Fig. 2. Salesperson work centrality as a moderator of the managerial latitude- salesperson perceived control link.

Table 4
Hypotheses results with controls.

Constructs	Salesperson perceived control			Adaptive selling		
	B	SE	CI (95 %)	B	SE	CI (95 %)
Managerial Latitude	0.29**	0.05	0.19, 0.39	0.28**	0.05	0.18, 0.38
Salesperson perceived control				0.16**	0.05	0.05, 0.26
Age	0.00	0.01	-0.02, 0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.01, 0.01
Gender	-0.01	0.11	-0.23, 0.21	-0.13	0.10	-0.34, 0.06
Education	-0.02	0.07	-0.15, 0.12	-0.07	0.07	-0.20, 0.05
Tenure	0.01	0.03	-0.06, 0.08	0.05	0.03	-0.01, 0.11
Work centrality * Managerial latitude	0.23**	0.04	0.15, 0.31			
R ²	0.10**			0.18**		
<i>Indirect effects</i>						
Indirect effect of managerial latitude on adaptive selling via salesperson perceived control				0.04**	0.02	0.01, 0.09
<i>Moderated Mediation</i>						
Conditional indirect effect via salesperson perceived control				0.03**	0.01	0.01, 0.07

Sample size (N) = 321, *p < .05, **p < .01, B = Unstandardized coefficient, SE = standard error, CI = Confidence interval.

salespeople’s adaptive-selling behavior. The study has also elicited that salesperson perceived control mediates the relationship between managerial latitude and adaptive selling. Importantly, we have provided

evidence for salesperson work centrality as a moderator of the direct relationship between managerial latitude and salesperson perceived control as well as an indirect relationship between managerial latitude and adaptive selling, via salesperson perceived control, such that the relationships are stronger when work centrality is high (vs. low). Our findings are critical, given the importance of salespeople’s adaptive-selling behaviors for customer satisfaction and customer loyalty (Román & Iacobucci, 2010) and the paucity of studies on the antecedents of adaptive selling. Bringing to the fore managerial latitude and salesperson perceived control as significant determinants of adaptive selling is crucial. This is especially so, given a considerable amount of organizations’ money is spent on salespeople’s capacity building, and yet, more than 50 % of them fall short of their annual sales targets (Atefi et al., 2018). Additionally, this is paramount when there is no exclusive method of selling market offerings to the customers. Likewise, by signifying the moderating role of work centrality, we offer sales managers a significant, yet overlooked, vantage point to look at the way salespeople’s work centrality can make a difference to the effectiveness of the latitude they provide to salespeople to shape their adaptive-selling behavior.

The present investigation contributes to the literature in the following four ways. In line with COR theory, our findings suggest that managerial latitude enhances salespeople’s personal resources (e.g., perceived control over work activities). In turn, they invest these resources in adaptive-selling behaviors, with the anticipation of augmenting their resources (e.g., job performance and job satisfaction). Thus, our first contribution is to the literature on the predictors of adaptive selling behavior, which has revealed these as being leadership (Tuan & Ngan, 2021; Wong et al., 2015), salesperson customer orientation (Kaynak et al., 2016), intrinsic motivation (Jaramillo et al., 2007), and self-leadership skills (Alnakhli et al., 2020).

Second, by showing that managerial latitude is positively associated with adaptive selling, we add to the scarce pool of studies (e.g.,

DelVecchio, 1996; 1998) on managerial latitude. Whilst previous studies have shown that managerial latitude positively influences customers' evaluation of the organization's products (DelVecchio, 1998) and customers' satisfaction level, thereby enabling salespeople to achieve their sales targets (DelVecchio, 1996), its role in shaping salespeople adaptive-selling behavior has been overlooked. Thus, we extend the scarce literature on managerial latitude.

Third, consistent with COR theory, our findings indicate that managerial latitude initiates resources' positive spirals and enhances salespeople's sensed control over their work activities, thus enabling them to embrace adaptive-selling behavior. Consequently, our research sheds light on a substantial, yet underappreciated, role of salesperson perceived control in mediating the influence of managerial latitude on adaptive selling. In this way, the present work contributes to the advancement of the nomological networks of predictors and outcomes of salesperson perceived control (Kemp et al., 2013; Uhrich, 2011).

Finally, the results provide support for the proposition that salespeople with high work centrality gain improved access to various contextual resources, and thus, as compared to their counterparts, they possess higher levels of perceived control and better ability to demonstrate adaptive-selling behavior. Findings from prior studies indicate that work centrality leads to several favorable consequences, for example, employee job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and job satisfaction (Diefendorff et al., 2002; Mannheim, Baruch, & Tal, 1997; Sharabi & Harpaz, 2010). Studies also show that it moderates the impact of leadership on various employee outcomes, such as employee explorative learning, exploitative learning, and intrapreneurial behavior (Ali et al., 2022; Usman et al., 2021). However, its role as a boundary condition of the link between managerial latitude and employee outcomes remains untapped in previous works. Hence, our research fills this gap and enhances our understanding of its important role.

5.1. Practical implications

By finding a positive association between managerial latitude and adaptive selling, we suggest that sales managers need to understand the importance of the role that they can play in improving salespeople's ability to cope with stressful situations, for instance, understanding challenging customers' demands and addressing these by altering their sales presentations and offerings. We further suggest that sales managers should offer them autonomy and decision-making authority. Such managers' behaviors are likely to signal to salespeople about the availability of contextual resources, as well as enhancing their personal resources, for example, their perceptions of control over their sales activities, thereby encouraging them to exhibit adaptive-selling behavior.

We also recommend that managers should focus on enhancing salespeople's sense of control over their sales activities. This would strengthen their sense of competence and self-efficacy, thus leading to them altering their sales strategy and presentations, taking responsibility for their sales outcomes, and orienting the transactions in the favor of the organization. The sense of control can enhance salespeople's abilities to perform challenging roles and cope with stressful events; inspiring them to adopt adaptive-selling behaviors. Finally, since work centrality is critically significant in reinforcing the effects of managerial latitude on salesperson perceived control and adaptive selling, sales managers should focus on ascertaining salespeople's level of work centrality. In other words, managers should focus on differentiating salespeople with high work centrality from their counterparts. Managers should utilize psychometric tests as a means to assess and determine the salespeople's level of work centrality. This would help them identify appropriate interventions for improving the effectiveness of managerial latitude for adaptive selling.

5.2. Limitations and future research directions

The current study does possess caveats. It should be noted that the findings of this research are based on a time-lagged design that addresses the common method problem but does not help us draw causal inferences. Longitudinal and experimental designs should be adopted for drawing causal inferences. Further, our findings have been derived from data gathered from employees within a developing context. Testing these interrelationships between managerial latitude, salesperson perceived control, work centrality, and adaptive selling in developed countries can improve the generalizability of our findings. Moreover, a number of variables can intervene in the association of managerial latitude with adaptive selling. For example, managerial latitude offers employees freedom and entails listening to others which can develop perceptions of organizational support among salespeople, which in turn can inspire them to alter their sales presentations to meet customers' diverse demands to ultimately enhance organizations' sales. Thus, perceived organizational support can also explain why managerial latitude influences adaptive selling. Additionally, many factors can act as relevant boundary conditions for the effect of managerial latitude on adaptive selling. Harmonious passion (HP), for instance, can be one such potential boundary condition. HP encourages employees' engagement in their work roles to gain positive experiences and pleasure (Anser et al., 2021a; 2021b). Consequently, employees high on HP can make better use of resources available in the contextual domain to improve their personal resources and engage in adaptive-selling behavior more effectively. As such, studying the role of HP as a moderating factor can further enhance our understanding of when managerial latitude is more effective in improving salespeople's sense of control and adaptive-selling behavior.

Finally, we propose salesperson tenure – the length of time a salesperson remains with the current employer, moderates the direct association between managerial latitude and salesperson perceived control, as well as the indirect association between managerial latitude and adaptive selling. Salespeople with longer tenure may have a greater opportunity to gain extensive knowledge about organizational policies, products, services, available organizational (contextual) resources, and the industry in which they operate. Consequently, salespeople with longer tenure can better leverage contextual resources to deal with diverse customers' needs, adapt their sales strategy accordingly, and close deals successfully in the organization's favor. Therefore, future studies could examine its moderating role.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Adeel Khalid: Writing – original draft, Data curation, Conceptualization, Project administration. **Sanjay Kumar Singh:** Writing – editing & reviewing, Data curation, Project Supervision, Conceptualization. **Muhammad Usman:** Writing – original draft, Formal analysis, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Muhammad Waqas:** Writing – original draft, Conceptualization, Data Curation, Software. **Alessio Ishizaka:** Writing review & editing, Visualization.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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