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Sequencing of multi-faceted job satisfaction across business-to-business and business-to-consumer salespeople: A multi-group analysis

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ABSTRACT

Advancements in the multi-faceted business-to-business job satisfaction literature suggest the facets are sequenced. This research examines the robustness of this sequencing within business-to-business salespeople in addition to assessing the generalizability of the sequencing to business-to-consumer salespeople. The results provide a large degree of support for the robustness of the sequencing as well as its generalizability. The results also suggest that the relationship between satisfaction with customer and satisfaction with work is more positive in business-to-business salespeople, and that the relationship between satisfaction with pay and satisfaction with work is more positive in business-to-consumer salespeople.

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1. Introduction

Salespeople are the dominant drivers of revenue for many firms. However, turnover continues to be high amongst business-to-business (B2B) salespeople (Boles, Dudley, Onyemah, Rouzies, & Weeks, 2012) and even higher amongst business-to-consumer (B2C) salespeople (Hurst & Good, 2009). This is problematic because turnover disrupts the ability of firms to generate revenue (DeConinck & Johnson, 2009) and can lead to the long-term loss of customers (Palmatier, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 2007). In addition, the cost of hiring and training a new salesperson is approximately 200% of their salary (Griffeth & Hom, 2001). Furthermore, as many senior salespeople are or will be retiring soon, much of the institutional and tacit knowledge may be lost when these salespeople leave the firm. Given these issues, it may be more important than ever to retain star salespeople who can mentor and provide knowledge to new salespeople. Therefore, understanding how facets of satisfaction are interrelated is increasingly valuable given the impact that job satisfaction facets have on turnover intentions (Rutherford, Boles, Hamwi, Madupall, & Rutherford, 2009) and willingness-to-mentor (Hartmann, Rutherford, Feinberg, & Anderson, 2014).

While salesperson satisfaction's impact is far reaching, the majority of extant literature assesses satisfaction as a global measure (Churchill, Ford, & Walker, 1974). Further, most studies which examine multi-faceted satisfaction fail to take into account whether or not satisfaction facets are sequenced (Friend, Johnson, Rutherford, & Hamwi, 2013). If the satisfaction facets are sequenced, not accounting for this sequencing can lead researchers to form erroneous conclusions regarding the direct and indirect influence, or lack thereof, of specific satisfaction facets on others. Recently, Friend et al. (2013) develops, tests, and finds general support for a theoretical model delineating causal relationships amongst the satisfaction facets (see Fig. 1). While the findings of Friend et al. (2013) offer great promise, their results are drawn from a single sample of B2B salespeople.

To advance understanding of multi-faceted job satisfaction, this research aims to extend the multi-faceted job satisfaction literature in two ways. First, this research examines the validity of the satisfaction sequencing proposed by Friend et al. (2013) with additional B2B data. Babin, Griffin, and Hair (2016) highlight the importance of validation studies given that many replications of studies find only a small percentage of the hypotheses are statistically significant. Thus, validation studies can suppress erroneous findings from influencing the knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors of researchers and managers (Woodside, 2012). If the satisfaction sequencing is validated, B2B researchers are more apt to expand the knowledge base about which specific facets of satisfaction directly and/or indirectly impact important outcomes for organizations.

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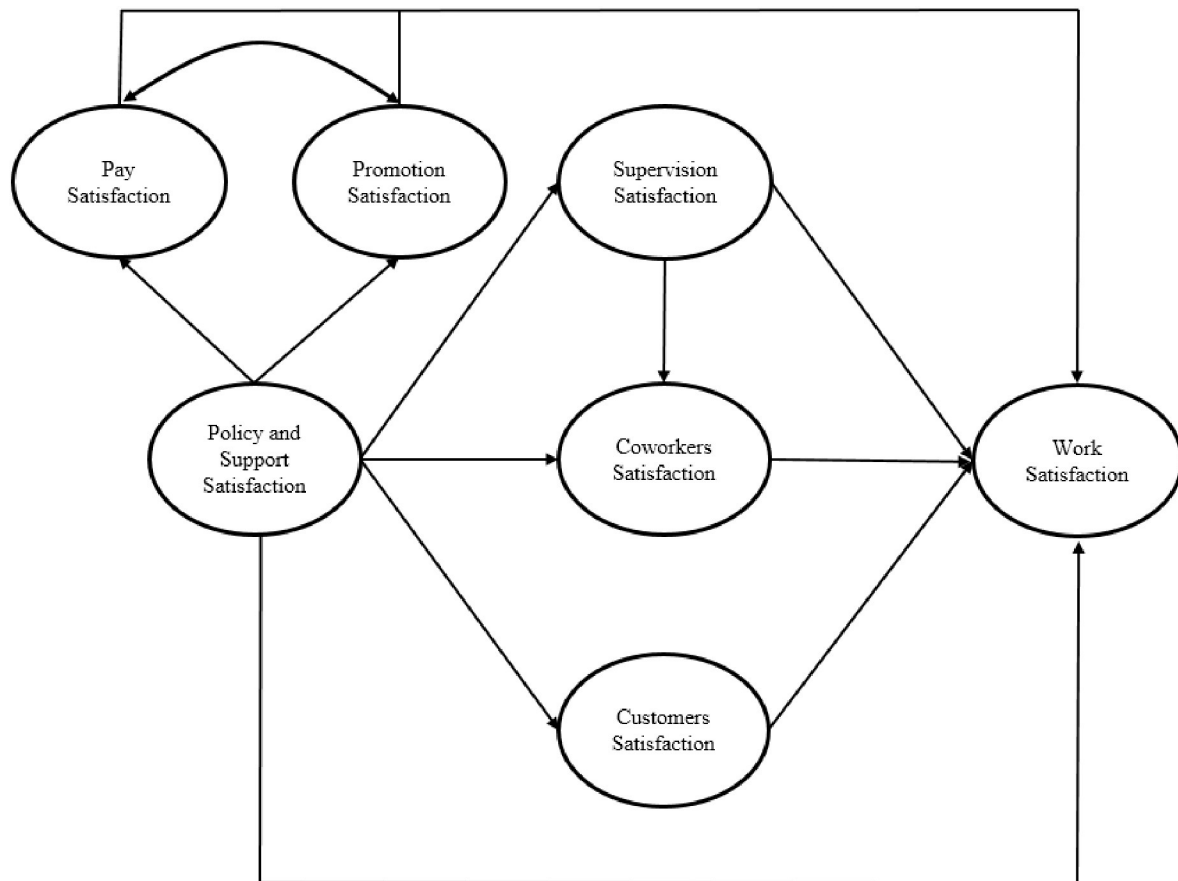


Fig. 1. Sequencing of multi-faceted job satisfaction in salespeople.

Second, this research examines the proposed sequencing within a consumer sales context. Given the meaningful differences between B2B and B2C sales (Brown & Lam, 2008; Gruen, 1995), some researchers base their hypothesis development and data collection on either B2B or B2C salespeople. However, other researchers combine B2B and B2C salesperson data, but when doing so, they rarely explore whether the relationships for B2B and B2C salespeople differ. Assessing the equivalency of multi-faceted satisfaction factor structure, factor loadings, and structural relationships across the B2B and B2C salesperson data provides the foundation for consumer sales researchers to extend the B2B literature to examine which specific facets of satisfaction impact important outcomes for retail organizations. Furthermore, researchers examining both B2B and B2C salespeople will be provided with a strong foundation for understanding similarities and differences in satisfaction between the two groups. Augmenting these contributions is a mediation analysis that lends insight into the total, indirect and specific indirect effects of various satisfaction facets on others.

2. Salesperson multi-faceted job satisfaction overview and path modeling

Multi-faceted instruments provide a more thorough understanding of job satisfaction than do global instruments by accounting for satisfaction with policy and support, pay, promotion, supervision, coworkers, customers, and work (Churchill et al., 1974). Despite research examining salesperson multi-faceted job satisfaction, most studies fail to account for inter-relationships between the facets. When predicting job satisfaction facets, studies often run multiple (e.g., multiple regression, and ANOVA) versus simultaneous (structural equation modeling) equations, thereby failing to account for causal relationships amongst the facets. This is problematic because not accounting for causal

relationships amongst the facets may lead to incorrect conclusions regarding examined relationships. Friend et al. (2013) develops sequencing for the seven facets of job satisfaction, in part, to reduce this gap within the literature.

Using expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964) as the foundation, Friend et al. (2013) posit that satisfaction with policy and support is the starting point of the model. In turn, this impacts instrumental, social, and ego-centric satisfaction, three unique aspects of job satisfaction (Nerkar, McGrath, & MacMillan, 1996). Instrumental satisfaction is closely related to satisfaction with work and reflects a reinforcement of behaviors associated with performance and tasks. Social satisfaction closely reflects satisfaction with supervision, coworkers, and customers and reflects the working relations and interactions within a given social system. Ego-centric satisfaction is closely associated with satisfaction with pay and promotion and reflects the extent to which one perceives they will personally benefit and maximize their utility. While Friend et al. (2013) develops and provides general support for their theoretically-driven sequencing, Friend et al. (2013) test the sequencing using a single B2B sample. Given this, research question one queries the validity of this sequencing.

Research Question One: Will a new sample validate the Friend et al. (2013) satisfaction sequencing?

3. Differences between B2B and B2C salespeople and the impacts on multi-faceted job satisfaction

The role of employees and the environment they work in is a key consideration when examining employee job satisfaction (Riggle, Edmondson, & Hansen, 2009). Given this, commonly acknowledged differences between B2B and B2C sales (Brown & Lam, 2008; Gruen, 1995) may lead to differences in the strengths of relationships amongst the

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