EMPATHY AND EGO-DRIVE IN THE B2B SALESFORCE: IMPACTS ON JOB SATISFACTION

Introduction

For decades, salesperson efficacy has been one of the captivating topics in sales and marketing (e.g., Churchill, Ford, Steven, & Walker, 1985; Lamont & Lundstrom, 1977; Ohiomah, Benyoucef, & Andreev, 2020; Verbeke, Dietz & Verwaal, 2011). Yet, maintaining a high-performing and satisfied B2B salesforce continues to be a profound challenge facing sales managers (Limbu, Jayachandran, Babin, & Peterson, 2016). The most cited estimates of salesforce costs in the United States show that firms spend $800 billion and $15 billion per year in salesforce incentives and training respectively (Zoltners, Sinha, & Lorimer, 2008). Turnover costs in B2B salesforces can be crippling, with the average rate hovering around 35%, with 10% of companies experiencing turnover rates above 55% (Chaine, 2019). On top of the exorbitant costs of hiring and maintaining salespeople, recent estimates suggest that only one-third of salespeople hit their sales quotas (Ye, 2021). B2B firms also need to contend with retaining their salespeople while they face greater complexities in the sales context, including longer sales cycles, more complex sales environments and more costly offerings compared to B2C salesforces (MacDonald, 2021). Purchasing also requires significant expenditure on the part of buyers, with purchasing often relying on buying centers where a variety of actors within the firm play a role in the purchasing process (e.g., Morris, Pitt, & Honeycutt, 2001).

At the same time, salesperson performance is complex, with many factors contributing to salesperson success (Sullivan, Peterson, & Krishnan, 2012; Ohiomah, Benyoucef, & Andreev, 2020; Walker, 1979). To be successful, B2B salespeople need to press on in the face of these challenges and manage a job that can deliver considerable blows to one's confidence and wellbeing (Vinchur, Schippmann, Switzer III, & Roth, 1998). A salesperson faces rejection to a far greater

extent than any other positions within a firm, and an ineffective salesperson may take rejection personally, making their performance suffer as a result (Boichuk et al., 2014). In simple terms, effective salespersons need to understand and accommodate customer needs and wants *and* be able to handle the demands of the job. If we conceptualize salesperson effectiveness as the individual's contribution of value to the company in the form of sales (Bosworth, Page, & Sherman, 1995; Jaramillo, Ladik, Marshal, & Mulki, 2007), it is clear that to fully grasp the drivers of sales success, we should consider also how salesperson characteristics relate to job satisfaction.

Early research suggested that sales performance influences job satisfaction (Yilmaz, 2002), leading to increased recognition of job satisfaction as a significant predictor of sales performance (Franke & Park, 2006; Ohiomah et al., 2020; Ziegler, Hagen, & Diehl, 2012). Due to the relative lack of constraints on salesperson behaviors in sales jobs, the impact of job satisfaction on performance is stronger in sales jobs compared to jobs with more constraints (Bowling, Khazon, Meyer, & Burrus, 2015). Finally, job satisfaction impacts other important downstream consequences, such as organizational commitment (Boles, Madupalli, Rutherford, & Wood, 2007) and employee turnover (Azeez, Jayeoba, & Adeoye, 2016; Mobley, 1977). For this reason, while sales success is typically considered as salespeople creating value for the firm (Guenzi & Troilo, 2006), to be most effective, salespeople need to be satisfied in their jobs. Looking at the relationship between empathy and ego-drive and job satisfaction can provide a missing element to the investigation of how these dispositions affect salesperson effectiveness. It is with this goal in mind that we set out to investigate the connection between two important dispositional tendencies of salespeople—*empathy* and *ego-drive*—with job satisfaction, to elucidate the role of trait factors in driving sales success through job satisfaction.

Almost 60 years ago, Mayer and Greenberg (1964) suggested that salespeople *need* to possess empathy and ego-drive to be effective. *Empathy* fosters within a salesperson the desire to understand the customer's needs. *Ego-drive* motivates them to close the sale and provides a buffer to one's confidence, allowing them to press on and be satisfied even in the face of rejection. The authors suggested that a dispositional balance between these two variables would lead to a synergistic effect, such that salespeople who possess both traits would have the critical dispositional tendency to want to understand the needs of customers *and* convert on the sale. Since then, a growing amount of research has examined how these traits exist within salespeople and affect their performance (Anaza, Inyang, & Saavedra, 2018; Locander, Locander, & Weinberg, 2020). However, limited research has investigated both empathy and ego-drive in the same study (Locander, Locander, & Weinberg, 2020). As a result, the potential for synergy between empathy and ego-drive within a salesperson may have been lost over the years. This is an important void to address given the need for company resources—including effective salespeople—to help companies *sustain* their competitive advantage over time (Barney, 1991), especially in dynamic markets (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). This is especially true given the growing complexity of B2B sales both domestically and internationally (Koponen, Julkunen, & Asai 2019; Monczka, Handfield, Giunipero, Guinipero, & Patterson, 2015).

To contribute to this research gap, we borrow from the domain of person-job fit (Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996) and look at whether the synergy proposed by empathy and ego-drive in salespeople translates similarly to job satisfaction. While each characteristic presents benefits to the sales job, no studies have investigated these attributes singularly to see how they might be similarly or differentially related to job satisfaction. As Mayer and Greenberg (1964) suggested, when these qualities exist within a salesperson, there should be a synergistic effect, such that the

best salespeople are those who possess both characteristics. Salespeople who are lacking in one or both attributes are expected to be disproportionately disadvantaged in their fit within a sales role.

Using content analysis of over 1,000 text-based reviews written by salespeople and published on Glassdoor.com — a platform where past and current employees rate and review their companies – we investigate the relationship between the interplay of B2B salesperson empathy and ego-drive with job satisfaction. We use the powerful automated text-analysis tool, Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) (Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2001), which allows for the inference and measurement of psychological traits of a person from written or spoken and transcribed text. In our case, the reviews feature written descriptions and pros and cons of the job (e.g., "*Great work experience! Pros: reasonable pay and benefits; Cons: late-night shifts.*") and provide the text from which we extract measurements of empathy and ego-drive.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, we review the conceptual contexts of empathy and ego-drive and the impact on salesperson effectiveness. Following this, we discuss our study and present our results. Then, we discuss the managerial implications of our findings and conclude with an overview of the limitations of the study and identify avenues for future research.

Empathy and Ego Drive in Salespeople

Two fundamental characteristics of effective salespeople are *empathy* and *ego-drive* (Mayer & Greenberg, 1964; Pitt, Ewing, & Berthon, 2002). Empathy refers to "the tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others" (Davis, 1983, pp. 113-114). When salespeople are empathetic, they can put themselves in the shoes of the customer and feel what they feel (Dawson, Soper, & Pettijohn, 1992). Conversely, ego-drive refers to a felt need to conquer the sale (Mayer & Greenberg, 1964). This can be referred to as a "need to sell". In this

case, converting on the sale itself is the motivating factor because such an accomplishment satisfies the salesperson's desire to win in a sales situation (Lockeman & Hallaq, 1982).

Although Mayer and Greenberg (1964) proposed that empathy and ego-drive produce a synergistic effect in salespeople, it is empathy that has been investigated most thoroughly in the literature. The benefit of empathy to salesperson effectiveness is that it increases the likelihood that a salesperson will try to understand the customer's needs (Widmier, 2002). Empathetic salespeople are more likely to feel or imagine the customer's pain and have a real concern for solving the customer's specific problems (Bagozzi et al., 2012). Possessing empathy influences salesperson effectiveness because it allows for sensing and deviating from a stagnant sales process to serve the specific needs of customers (Franke & Park, 2006; Locander, Locander, & Weinberg, 2020; Spiro & Weitz, 1990) and provide customized solutions (Giacobbe, Jackson, Crosby, & Bridges, 2006). As such, empathy has been shown to influence important sales behaviors such as listening (Comer & Drollinger, 1999), which in turn, has been shown to influence customer trust and satisfaction in the salesperson (Aggarwal, Castleberry, Ridnour, & Shepherd, 2005).

When combined with positive affect, salesperson empathy has been shown to drive sales performance (Anaza et al., 2018) and contribute favourably to customers' overall evaluation of the brand (Lee & Yi, 2021). Such findings have been more recently validated by Locander, Locander, and Weinberg's (2020) research, which suggests that salespeople's cognitive empathy and trait competitiveness–a convergent construct of ego drive (Shannahan et al., 2013)—may drive a salesperson's ability to make sense of and adapt to customers' needs, which, in turn, affects sales performance. To our knowledge, only the research from Locander, Locander and Weinberg (2020) has simultaneously investigated empathy and trait-competitiveness—a similar construct to ego-

drive—of salespeople. A literature table of extant research on empathy and constructs related to ego-drive is provided in the appendix.

The eschewing of ego-drive could also be a result of the construct appearing, at face value, to be synonymous with *selling orientation*. Selling orientation describes a motivational stance which describes a salesperson's tendency to want to satisfy short-term sales interests, which can occur at the expense of the customer (Bagozzi et al., 2012). However, this definition of selling orientation does not align with ego-drive, which describes a drive to close the sale as a means to personal gratification (Greenberg & Greenberg, 1976; Mayer & Greenberg, 1964), whereas those who are high on selling orientation are motivated for extrinsic rewards (e.g., sales commissions) associated with accomplishing sales (Bagozzi et al., 2012). For that reason, salespeople who are selling-oriented may be satisfied when their short-term sales interests are met but may not be self-driven to close the sale.

Given each construct's divergent influence on salesperson outcomes and the lack of research examining both of these constructs together, we look to fill this gap by assessing the relationship between empathy and ego-drive and job satisfaction of B2B salespeople.

The Interplay of Empathy and Ego-Drive Within Salespeople

Salespeople can be both empathetic *and* have ego-drive or may not possess either characteristic at all. Or, some salespeople can be highly empathetic, but low on ego-drive and vice-versa. The interplay of this balance is proposed to lead to differences in salesperson effectiveness (Mayer & Greenberg, 1964). Salespeople with both empathy and ego-drive should be motivationally attuned to the behaviors that are most conducive to job performance since a salesperson who possesses both qualities is genuinely motivated to learn about and satisfy the

needs of the customer, while also being driven to close the sale. An imbalance between these attributes within a salesperson presents an interesting dynamic. A high level of empathy and low ego-drive could lead to a salesperson who is very concerned for the customer but is less effective at closing sales. Whereas, a high ego-drive and low level of empathy could lead to a "pushy" salesperson who "will bulldoze through some sales" (Mayer & Greenberg, 1964, p. 121), but is not sufficiently motivated to understand or satisfy the needs of the customer. In contrast, possessing low empathy and low ego-drive would likely provide little motivational value to an individual to make them an effective salesperson, since they possess neither the drive to understand the customer, nor the drive to conquer the sale on its own. The interplay between empathy and ego-drive within an individual salesperson, as proposed by Mayer and Greenberg in their original article (1964), is illustrated in Figure 1 below. Figure 1 shows how salesperson effectiveness would be expected to translate from a balance of both high empathy and high ego-drive, and the expected ineffectiveness of low levels of both attributes, or the imbalance between them.

	Low Empathy	**High Empathy**
Low Ego-Drive	Ineffective salesperson	Attentive salesperson
High Ego-Drive	Pushy salesperson	Most effective salesperson

Figure 1. Empathy and Ego-Drive as Factors of Salesperson Trait Effectiveness

The Impact of Empathy and Ego-Drive on Salesperson Job Satisfaction

Both empathy and ego-drive have benefits and drawbacks for sales success. Together, in sufficient quantity, these characteristics should produce an effective salesperson. An individual who possesses both qualities is genuinely motivated to learn about and satisfy the needs of the customer and is driven to close the sale and will be most effective in their selling job. But does

this translate similarly to job satisfaction? Looking at the interaction between the salesperson and the sales job provides an indication as to the quality of the fit between the salesperson's characteristics and the sales job itself. Person-job fit exists when employees' needs, desires or preferences are met in their jobs or when their knowledge, skills and abilities are commensurate with those demanded by the job (Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996). In turn, this can result in sustained job satisfaction and wellbeing (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). Because of this we would expect that salespeople who are empathetic and who have ego-drive would also be the most satisfied in their sales job. In contrast, if a B2B salesperson has neither the ego-drive to withstand rejection, nor the empathy required to understand the needs of customers, they will inevitably be ineffective in a selling job. As a result, they will likely also be less satisfied with their selling job. This leads to hypotheses 1a and 1b.

H1a: B2B salespeople who are high (vs. low) in empathy will be more (vs. less) satisfied with their sales jobs compared to the those who are low (vs. high) in empathy.

H1b: B2B salespeople who are high (vs. low) in ego-drive will be more (vs. less) satisfied with their sales jobs compared to the those who are low (vs. high) in ego-drive.

The question of job satisfaction becomes interesting when looking at the archetype of a salesperson with an imbalance between attributes. On the one hand, having high empathy could lead to a salesperson who is intrinsically motivated to find the appropriate solution for their customers. On its own, this should contribute a positive impact on job satisfaction. However, adding to this a low ego-drive may be indicative of a salesperson who is not motivated by the sale itself, which could negatively affect job satisfaction for a job that entails closing sales. In addition, highly empathic salespeople with comparably lower ego-drives may be less equipped to deal with rejection (Mayer & Greenberg, 1964). Similarly, a high ego-drive may provide such a buffer to

one's confidence, as well as the motivational fodder to want to close the sale, meaning a positive boost for job satisfaction. However, adding low empathy to this equation may indicate a salesperson type that is not intrinsically driven to deliver value for customers, potentially providing a detriment to job satisfaction. As a result, we make no predictions about the nature of the difference between these two types but present them as competing elements of hypothesis 2.

H2: B2B salespeople who are high in empathy will be more (vs. less) satisfied with their sales jobs when they are low (vs. high) in ego-drive.

Method

We look at the influence of salespeople empathy and ego-drive on job satisfaction using content-analysis of text-based job reviews from Glassdoor.com. Glassdoor.com is an online job site and recruiting platform where users can submit and view company reviews. Using the platform is free, but when users sign up, they are prompted to write a review about their previous and current employers. This includes providing qualitative descriptions about the pros and cons of working at the company. As well, users can provide information about salaries, interview questions and reviews of the interview process. In addition to written reviews, Glassdoor.com users rate their employer on a five-star system (1 star = worst employer, 5 = best employer) (Pitt et al., 2019). The platform has ratings and reviews for over 770,000 companies with millions of ratings and reviews by past and present employees (Glassdoor.com). We operationalize job satisfaction using Glassdoor's "company rating", assuming that a 1-star rating is indicative of very low job satisfaction, and a 5-star rating is indicative of very high job satisfaction. Research has shown that Glassdoor.com ratings provide an imperfect proxy for job satisfaction within an organization (Landers, Brusso, & Auer, 2019) and should present sufficient validity given the array of organizations within our sample.

Data Collection

Reviews from salespeople were scraped from the website, which produced over 50,000 individual reviews from current and former salespeople from 268 B2B companies. As Glassdoor.com requires all users who sign up for the platform to write at least one company review, many reviews contain only a few words. As the accuracy of content analysis tools increases with the word-count of individual cases analyzed, we sought to balance the word count with our final desired sample size. This was a minimum of 1,000 reviews, which was reached with 160 words as our cut-off point for the reviews to include. Given our population of interest, we also only sought reviews from *current* B2B salespeople. We specified current employees only to avoid issues with the accuracy of company ratings being affected by employees who no longer work at those companies, as their recollection could be affected by the time passed. Since we are interested in the experience and satisfaction of salespeople, we selected reviews from those who identified as "salesperson," rather than other sales-related roles such as customer-service representatives, sales trainers, or sales managers. This sampling criteria was asserted to investigate the impact of these characteristics in people who are most likely to engage in the sales process within the B2B context, rather than jobs that center around helping customers or managing salespeople. Following these restrictions, this left us with a sample of 1,103 reviews from current salespeople from 161 B2B companies. We analyzed this data using the Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count text-analysis tool (LIWC).

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC)

Linguistic Inquiry and Word Count (LIWC) is a powerful automated text-analysis tool that infers and measures individual characteristics from an individual's written or spoken and

transcribed text. LIWC analyzes text by counting the occurrence of words in meaningful categories associated with one's emotion, cognition and other psychological processes (Pennebaker, Francis, & Booth, 2001; Pennebaker, Boyd, Jordan, & Blackburn, 2015). To do so, the software uses built-in and customizable dictionaries to measure the extent to which people use these categories of words in text (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010).

LIWC does not have an existing measure for empathy. Thus, we employed a recommended methodology for creating a custom dictionary of empathy in LIWC (Donohue, Liang, & Druckman, 2014; Humphreys & Wang, 2018). To begin our process of creating an empathy dictionary, we first needed to identify a lexicon source for our empathy words, which we derived from the work of computer science and natural language processing researchers, Sedoc and his colleagues (Sedoc, Buechel, Nachmany, Buffone, & Ungar, 2019). This lexicon was developed by using natural language processing, producing a list of words and associated weights representing the extent to which the word express empathy. The lexicon comprised 9,357 words, which were semantically grouped into clusters and rated using their weighted average score on empathy to provide a rank-order distribution of the words. These words comprise our source for identifying words whose use is indicative of empathic cognitive processes.

The critical next steps were to use this source to filter systematically from such a large lexicon to identify the final dictionary of words whose use is indicative of empathic capacity, with a view to fulfill the recommendations of building the LIWC empathy dictionary (Pennebaker, Boyd, Jordan & Blackburn, 2015). To begin our process of elimination, we eliminated all word clusters below the median empathy rating (*Mdn* =3.5/5). Our rationale for this is that word clusters falling below the median value of empathy could not be synonymous or representative of psychological empathy. This left us with a set of 4,675 words representing the 50th percentile and

above for empathy rating. Following this, we eliminated clusters of words which possessed no conceivable semantic connection to or representation of the psychological construct of empathy. To do so, we removed individual words from their semantic clusters to list them individually and eliminated any words that were inappropriate to consider further for the dictionary. Figure 2 depicts a flow chart of the steps used in the development of our empathy dictionary for LIWC with examples of words eliminated at each stage. This left us with a manageable set of 583 words. From this set, two independent judges rated each word based on whether it should be eliminated or remain in the final dictionary. Both judges needed to agree on each word's inclusion. Following the procedural recommendation of observational assessment (Fleiss, Levin, & Paik, 1981; Zwick, 1988), the proportion of agreement between two independent raters was .83. Any words that did not have unanimous support were semantically analyzed using online sources to determine the appropriateness of its use and meaning. Following this, words that did not receive unanimous support were excluded from the final dictionary. Ultimately, this left us with precisely 200 empathy words and word stems, which then comprised our empathy dictionary. The final list of words used to measure empathy is shown in the appendix.

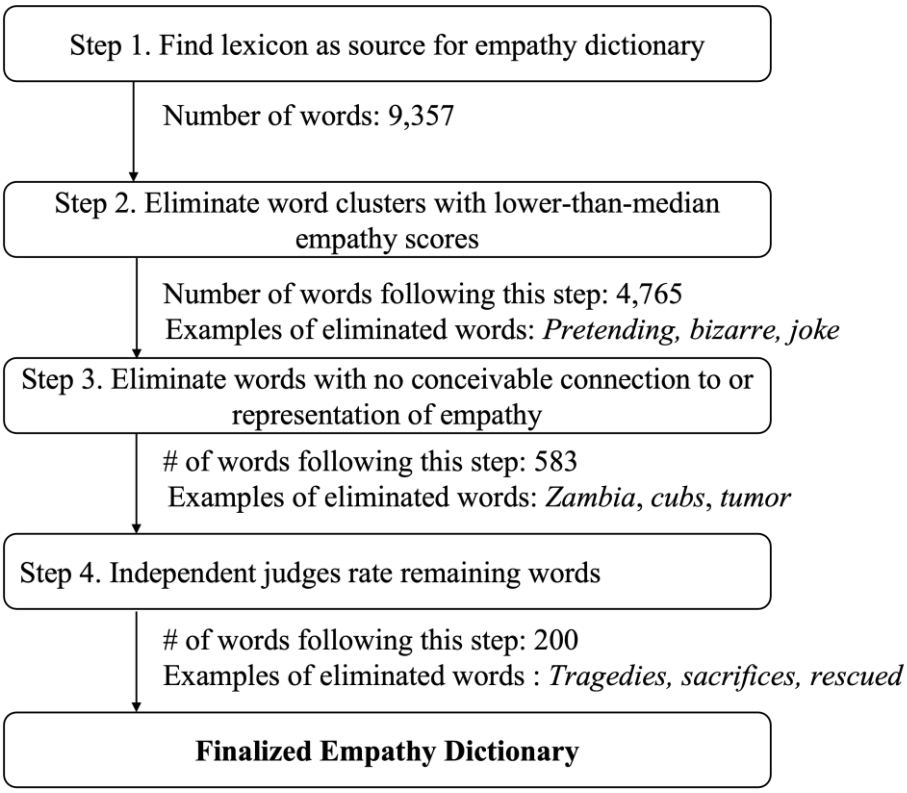


Figure 2. Process of Empathy Dictionary Creation for LIWC

We operationalized ego-drive using the "power" dimension in LIWC. Mayer and Greenberg conceptualized ego-drive as the *need to conquer* (1964). While some research has conceptualized ego-drive as trait competitiveness (Locander, Locander, & Weinberg, 2020; Shannahan et al., 2013), we believe this is not the truest reflection of this conceptualization. McClelland (1987) viewed power as an implicit tendency in people, defined by the desire for dominance and influence, which when translated to the salesperson means those with high ego-drive receive self-gratification through the sale for the sake of converting the sale. While the nuance of this difference is subtle, we believe it presents an important distinction from trait competitiveness. Trait competitiveness describes a tendency to be motivated to compete with and perform better than others (Locander et al., 2020; Shannahan et al., 2013). As a result, trait

competitiveness defines a personal performance goal based on one's own performance compared to others. Instead, ego-drive represents a motivational tendency where performance is assessed against the sale itself (i.e., whether the sale was made or not.) LIWC's internal power dictionary provides a measure for the fundamental need associated with being motivated by impacting and persuading others and validating one's sense of self through their desire to win (McClelland, Koestner, & Weinberger, 1989; Winter, 1973). In this case, the win is the sale.

Results

We first performed a median split for empathy and power words to determine the cutoff point for high vs. low to determine the 2 x 2 framework of salespeople type by crossing high/low empathy and high/low ego-drive. As we were interested in the differences between each type's relationship with job satisfaction, we first assessed the relationship between the main effect variables and conducted a Spearman correlation analysis among company rating, ego-drive, and empathy.

A significant negative correlation was observed between company rating and ego-drive (r = -.19, p < .001, *95% CI* [-.24, -.13]). This correlation provides evidence that as salesperson ego-drive increases, the lower their overall job satisfaction is. In contrast, a significant positive correlation was observed between company rating and empathy (r = .16, p < .001, *95% CI* [.10, .22]). This correlation provides evidence that as salesperson empathy increases, the greater overall job satisfaction is. There was no correlation between empathy and ego-drive. Table 1 presents the results of the correlations.

Table 1. Spearman Correlation Results Among Company Rating, Ego-drive, and Empathy

Combination	*r*	95% CI	*n*	*p*
Company Rating-Ego-drive	-.19	[-.24, -.13]	1103	< .001
Company Rating-Empathy	.16	[.10, .22]	1103	< .001
Ego-drive-Empathy	.00	[-.06, .06]	1103	.994

Note. p-values adjusted using the Holm correction.

With the aim to test our hypotheses, we conducted an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to assess any differences between the four salesperson groups and job satisfaction. The means and standard deviations of company rating by group are shown in Table 2. The results of the ANOVA were significant, $F(3, 1099) = 19.65$, $p < .001$, indicating there are significant differences in job satisfaction among salesperson types (Table 2). The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3.[1]

[1] We included how long the salesperson has stayed with their current company at the time they posted company reviewers as a random-effect predictor in the model. Hausman test also suggested a random effect model was more appropriate. The results remained the same after incorporating their employment length into the model, with the estimates for interaction ($\beta_{empathy} = -.38$, $t = -2.18$), empathy ($\beta_{empathy} = .57$, $t = 4.90$), and ego-drive ($\beta_{empathy} = -.29$, $t = -2.33$) all being significant. The maximum likelihood test suggested the original model was preferred more than the model that includes employment length as a random-effect variable, χ^2 (1) = 1.21, $p = .27$.

Table 2. Analysis of Variance Table for Company Rating by Empathy and Ego-drive Grouping

Term	*SS*	*df*	*F*	*p*
Empathy/Ego-drive	120.08	3	19.65	< .001
Residuals	2238.88	1099		

Table 3. Mean, Standard Deviation, and Sample Size for Company Rating by Empathy vs. Ego-drive Grouping

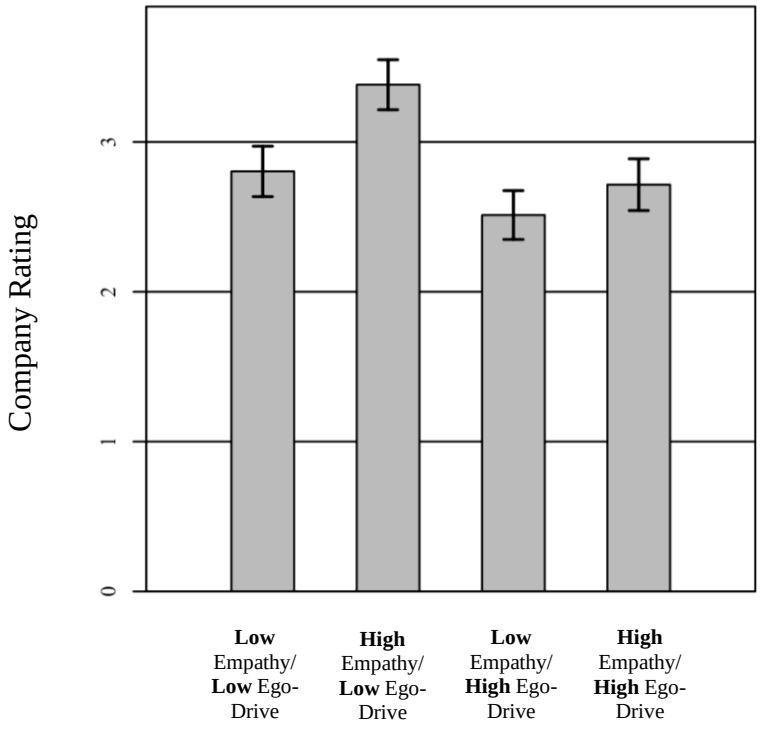
Combination	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Low Empathy/Low Ego-drive	2.80	1.46	290
High Empathy/Low Ego-drive	3.38	1.50	309
Low Empathy/High Ego-drive	2.51	1.31	248
High Empathy/High Ego-drive	2.71	1.41	256

Post-hoc Tests

Paired *t*-tests were calculated between each pair of measurements to further examine the differences among the variables. Salespeople characterized by high empathy and low ego-drive showed a significantly higher company rating compared to all other types. Specifically, the mean

for High Empathy/Low Ego-drive (M = 3.38, SD = 1.50) was significantly larger than for Low Empathy/Low Ego-drive (M = 2.80, SD = 1.46), Low Empathy/High Ego-drive (M = 2.51, SD = 1.31), and High Empathy/High Ego-drive (M = 2.71, SD = 1.41), all at the $p < .001$ level. Although nothing can be said about the relative differences on job satisfaction among the salesperson types, it is worth noting that the greatest disparity with high empathy and low ego-drive is compared to high ego-drive salesperson types. Figure 3 shows a bar graph depicting the means of company rating by empathy and ego-drive category groupings.

Figure 3. Means of Company Rating by Empathy and Ego-Drive Categories with 95% CI Error Bars



Summary of Results

The results of our study show that possessing empathy appears to be associated with higher levels of job satisfaction, especially when combined with low ego-drive. These findings appear to contradict prevailing expectations that ego-drive provides a buffer for salespeople to press on

unaffected in their jobs. Although Mayer and Greenberg (1964) proposed a synergy for having both high empathy and high ego-drive, our results indicate that high levels of ego-drive are associated with lower levels of job satisfaction compared to lower ego-drive. Although the difference is only significant when comparing high empathy and low ego-drive to other types, a pattern persists. High ego-drive is associated with comparably lower job satisfaction, while low ego-drive is associated with higher satisfaction. Our results show that possessing high ego-drive may not be conducive to job satisfaction, even if a salesperson has high empathy.

Discussion

Our results show that job satisfaction is different depending on salesperson types defined by high vs. low empathy and high vs. low ego-drive. The salesperson type representing high empathy and low ego-drive showed significantly higher job satisfaction than other types. Keeping with extant research showing the positive impact of empathy on beneficial outcomes (Aggarwal et al., 2005; Anaza et al., 2018; Locander, Locander, & Weinberg, 2020), our results indicate that job satisfaction is yet another area where empathy is an advantage. However, contrary to our expectations, we found that high empathy combined with high ego-drive was not associated with the highest level of job satisfaction compared to other salesperson types. Our results suggest that, when combined with low ego-drive, B2B salespeople who are high in empathy tend to be more satisfied in their jobs. Perhaps the most exciting aspect of our work pertains to what it means given the influence of job satisfaction *on* sales performance (e.g., Franke & Park, 2006; Ohiomah et al., 2020). The implications of this work are important, as fostering commitment in salespeople is key to B2B sales success at the individual and organizational level.

Managerial Implications

This work suggests several implications for sales managers. First, managers should recognize the limitations of ego-drive in salespeople. It is possible that sales managers may be drawn to select salespeople by ego-drive-related attributes such as competitiveness and high extrinsic motivation. Selecting and rewarding salespeople with these attributes could be focusing on the wrong attributes of salespeople that should be fostered and incentivized. Sales managers should consider hiring salespeople with a balance between empathy and ego-drive, while prioritizing empathy in sales recruits.

Our findings provide evidence that the manner in which salespeople are incentivized may need to be tuned to salesperson type. Given the discernible difference in job satisfaction of the various salesperson type, it is possible that compensation plans could be better tuned to suit the dispositional motivations of salespeople. Closing a sale is often the result of persistence, yet not all persistence is created equally, meaning not all persistence is beneficial for sales outcomes (Chaker, Zablah, & Noble, 2018). Sales managers can reward salespeople in a way that enhances their personal contributions to selling and allows them to be rewarded based on their characteristics. That is, managers can build compensation plans that align with promoting the types of behaviors that could be satisfying to empathetic versus ego-driven salespeople. For instance, sales managers could incorporate customer satisfaction into salesperson incentive plans (e.g., Widmier, 2002) for highly empathetic salespeople. Alternatively, ego-driven salespeople could be rewarded using short-term incentives to promote certain behaviors at different stages of the selling process.

Alternatively, or concurrently, sales managers can use these findings to facilitate sales performance outcomes. Being concerned about customers' needs can be difficult to engender in someone (Davis, 1990), but the benefits of ego-drive on sales success can be engineered using

incentive structures. Ego-drive represents a moving-forward towards the sale in pursuit of personal gratification. Highly empathic salespeople with low ego-drive might be slower or less willing to close a sale. However, behavior can be motivated through the right incentives. Sales managers can set sales process targets for salespeople to hit in securing new customers. Such process targets can include financial or non-financial rewards tied to salespeople using the customer information they derive to sales execution steps. For instance, a supplier of office equipment could devise an incentive structure where salespeople are rewarded a small amount by making contact with a lead, a slightly greater amount when the leads are follow-up with, and a greater amount for completing a sales presentation. Having incentives tied to adaptive sales behaviors is one way for sales managers to modify the sales environment to extract the drive to close the sale, while maintaining the benefit of an empathetic sales force.

Sales managers should also consider Glassdoor.com as a source to understand the perspective of current and former salespeople. Using LIWC or other text analysis tools offers a data-driven way to explore how salespeople feel towards the company. Less formally though, Glassdoor offers a rich resource for sales managers to see how their own sales forces feel about the company.

Research Implications

This work provides support for the direction of the literature, which has embraced empathy as an important trait of salespeople. We provide the additional contribution by showing that high levels of ego-drive, although seemingly beneficial for some sales outcomes, is negatively associated with job satisfaction.

Looking specifically at the combination of high empathy and low ego-drive, we can ascertain potential sources of the connection between this salesperson type and job satisfaction,

which offer potentially fruitful areas of future research. Recent research from Ohiomah and his colleagues (Ohiomah et al., 2020) shows through meta-analyses that sales success at the salesperson unit of analysis is determined by salesperson competencies. These competencies include interpersonal skills, adaptive selling, and job satisfaction—all of which should be enhanced by the salesperson profile of high empathy and low ego drive. The combination of empathy and low ego-drive could be emblematic of a salesperson who considers the needs of others and is not concerned with winning sales. This could alleviate tension for the salesperson who is focused on and derives satisfaction from satisfying customers' needs, rather than being driven to satisfy the need to close the sale. This is echoed in practice where salespeople who are genuinely motivated to help customers have the most sales success (Hancock, Hatami, & Rayan, 2011). Future research could investigate the proposed mediated relationship between empathy and ego-drive sales types, job satisfaction and job performance. As well, salespeople's selling performance and their motivation levels at work may further affect customers' perceptions and evaluations of the brand. Given the relationship between salespeople type and job satisfaction shown in this work, it would be valuable to explore how ego-drive and empathy of salespeople may affect customers' perceptions of the brand they represent.

Further to this, our study points to important research implications and direction for future research surrounding the nature of ego-drive compared to trait competitiveness. We conceptualize ego-drive in salespeople as a motivational drive to close the sale. We find this similar but distinct from trait competitiveness, which is the construct that dominates most sales research in this area. Future research could be directed at explicating the distinction between ego-drive and trait competitiveness.

Finally, additional implications may become more apparent, as we begin to better understand the profound influence of mental health in sales jobs. With the rising interest and notice in mental health in the workplace and in life, it is important to understand fundamental connections between characteristics of salespeople and job satisfaction. Given the relationship between salesperson type and job satisfaction shown in this work, we suggest future research can explore connections between ego-drive and empathy and the mental health of salespeople.

Limitations

The intention of this work is to shed light on how empathy and ego-drive could influence salesperson success by looking at how these traits relate to job satisfaction. There are limitations worth noting for this work. First, we use a measure of company rating as a proxy for job satisfaction. While we expect this measure should approximate job satisfaction, its validity is not ascertained in this study. In addition, our measure of ego-drive is operationalized as power words due to the conceptual proximity; however, the validity of this measure cannot be ascertained above face-level. As well, we develop and use our own measure of empathy to account for the absence of an empathy variable in LIWC. Although we exercised a rigorous methodology in its selection, we are unable to assert the extent of its validity as a measure of empathy.

Another limitation is that we do not have a measure of sales performance. Although there is strong support that salespeople who are satisfied with their jobs perform better (Franke & Park, 2006; Ohiomah et al., 2020), it is of course possible that this is not the case. A lousy salesperson could be satisfied with their job, and a high-performing salesperson could be dissatisfied with their job. So, while Mayer and Greenberg (1964) and other scholars have proposed empathy and ego-drive as the most important traits of successful salespeople, we are unable to show direct support to this conclusion.

The use of Glassdoor also presents another limitation due to the potential for response bias. Individuals who contribute the most qualitative feedback about their companies are likely to be salespeople who are either happy or unhappy with their jobs. As a result, our sample may be missing responses from people who have more average levels of job satisfaction. We hope the number of observations in our sample alleviates some of these concerns.

Although we speculate as to the influence of these traits on job satisfaction, this study does not provide evidence of any causal impact between any of the variables. Instead, we look at the association between them. As a result, although the implications of this work suppose that empathy and ego-drive are influencing job satisfaction, our study cannot rule out other reasons for the associations.

Finally, the values of what determines high vs. low in either characteristic is determined by our sample itself. As such, what is determined to be high or low in empathy or ego-drive is measured relative to the values of the sample, rather than against an objectively high or low value of empathy or ego-drive.

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Appendix

Empathy Dictionary Words

able	felt	needs	saving
abilit*	firsthand	needy	scar
accept*	free*	neighbor*	scars
accessib*	friend*	nice	scarring
accountab*	fulfil*	normaliz*	sensitiv*
advocat*	give*	nurtur*	sentiment*
affection*	giving	outpour*	shaming
affiliat*	goodness	pain*	share*
altruis*	appeas*	partner*	sharing
appreciat*	grace*	peace*	shelter*
appreciate*	gracious*	perceiv*	sick
assist*	grateful*	percept*	sickly
aware*	grief	perspectiv*	sickness
beloved	griev*	pity	soft*
care	guilt	plea	soul*
caring	happiness	plead*	struggl*
charit*	happy	pleas*	suffer*
cherish*	hardship*	plight*	support*
civil*	heal*	precious	surviv*
collective	healthcare	darling	sweet*
comfort	hear	dear	sympath*
comforting	hearing	preserv*	symptom*
compassion*	hears	privacy	tear*
comprehen*	heard	private*	tender*
concern*	heart*	privilege*	thank
condolence	help*	profound*	thanks
conscien*	hope*	progress*	thanking
consider*	hug	protect*	gratitude
convey*	hugs	recover*	thankful*
cope	hugging	redeem*	therap*
coping	human*	redemption	thoughts
counsel*	humbl*	rehab*	thoughtful
crie*	hurt*	relate*	tireless*
cry*	identify*	relating	together*
deserved	identifies	relatable	touch*

deserving	illness*	relation	tough*
donat*	includ*	relief	trag*
dream*	inclus*	reliev*	treat*
earn*	innocen*	reparat*	trouble*
embrac*	insight*	rescu*	understand*
emotion*	inspir*	resilien*	understood
empath*	lend*	resonat*	valu*
empower*	listen*	responsib*	view*
encourag*	lov*	sacred	volunteer*
enlighten*	meaning*	sacrif*	vulnerab*
equal*	mercy	sad*	warm*
esteem*	merci*	safe*	weep*
ethic*	moral*	salvag*	wound*
express	mutual	sanctuar*	wrench*
feel*	natur*	save*	wrongdoing*

Note: * denotes word stem, such that any word beginning with that string of letters will be included.