

A Tale of Support: Linking Perceived Supervisory Support and Work Engagement to Pharmaceutical Salespersons' Performance

Faheem Ahmad Khan

Assistant Professor, Department of Management Sciences
COMSATS University Islamabad, Wah Campus, Pakistan
Email: faheemkhan@ciitwah.edu.pk

Tahir Saeed

Head of Department, Leadership and Management Studies
National Defense University, Islamabad, Pakistan
Email: hodlms@ndu.edu.pk

Muhammad Umer Quddoos (Corresponding Author)

Assistant Professor, Department of Commerce,
Bahauddin Zakariya, University, Multan.
Email: umerattari@bzu.edu.pk

Amir Rafique

Assistant Professor, Department of Management Sciences,
COMSATS University Islamabad, Pakistan
Email: amir.rafiq@comsats.edu.pk

Abstract:

Based on data from 619 sales representatives working in 24 multinational and 76 National pharmaceutical firms in Pakistan, propositions of Affective Events Theory (AET) are tested. Affective Events Theory (AET) proposes that behavioral demonstrations encompassing the effects like supervisory support at the workplace stimulate emotional reactions like engagement that further influence the workers' behaviors. In the current study, we applied this theoretical framework to elucidate the relationships between the proposed variables of our conceptual model. The study, in specific terms, investigated the relationships between perceived supervisory support and the three dimensions of work engagement i.e. vigor, dedication, and absorption. Furthermore, the relationships of these three dimensions of work engagement with the two dimensions of salesperson's performance i.e. selling behavioral performance and non-selling behavioral performance. Structural equation modeling was applied to test the proposed hypotheses. The results revealed that perceived supervisory support is positively related to all three dimensions of work engagement, namely vigor, dedication, and absorption, and two out of three dimensions of work engagement are positively related to two dimensions of salesperson's performance i.e. selling behavioral performance and non-selling behavioral performance.

Keywords: Affective Events Theory, Perceived Supervisory Support, Work Engagement

I. Introduction

One of the key concerns related to salesforce management is how to boost salespersons' performance (Friend, Johnson, Luthans, & Sohi, 2016; Kidwell et al., 2021). This issue is predominantly pertinent because salespeople today operate in a highly dynamic and competitive environment (Bettina Eibl, Frieder R. Lang & Cornelia Niessen, 2020), and the emergence of the modern knowledge economy has put much emphasis and demands on salespersons for achieving a higher level of performance (Heyns & Rothmann, 2018). At the same time, firms are continuously striving to gain and sustain a competitive advantage (Agnihotri, Gabler, Itani, Jaramillo, & Krush, 2017; Gustafson, Pomirleanu, & John-Mariadoss, 2018; Heyns & Rothmann, 2018) through the use of resources available to them and most important resource in this context is the salesforce of any organization. Although past research in the sales management realm has investigated managerial (Gustafson, Pomirleanu, & John-Mariadoss, 2018) as well as workforce-related issues (Khusainova, de Jong, Lee, Marshall, & Rudd, 2018), points out that most of our understanding regarding the performance of salespeople remains inadequate because it is dependent on an assortment of firms' internal and external factors. Performance feedback from managers to salesforce does affect the satisfaction level of individuals (Marco Tagliabue, Sigridur Sofia Sigurjonsdottir & Ingunn Sandaker, 2020) which in turn boost their performance. All in all, what drives salespersons' performance is still a mystery.

Given today's hypercompetitive marketplace and increasing workplace complexity, the sales landscape has been changed (Grisaffe, VanMeter, & Chonko, 2016; Lacoste, 2018), and selling functions in most firms are becoming more critical (Paesbrugge, Sharma, Rangarajan, & Syam, 2018). The COVID-19 pandemic has also led to quick, wide-ranging, and severe challenges for the salesforce that need attention (Hartmann & Lussier, 2020). Likewise, the role of salespeople is changing from transactional to consultative sellers (Cron, 2017), and the ultimate performance of salespeople has become more important now for firms (Bolander et al. 2020; Gillespie & Noble, 2017; Murphy & Coughlan, 2018). In this background, Rangarajan, Sharma, Paesbrugge, and Boute (2018) stressed the need for a renewed examination of supervisory and salespersons-specific variables germane to eventual success. Similarly, organizations have a hot pursuit of appropriate methods and approach to keep the workforce engaged for continued success. These overall shifts in the dynamics of work and the changing requirements of the organizations have also altered how to measure overall performance. Of course, salesforce performance is not an exception. Likewise, according to Trépanier, Fernet, Austin, and Ménard (2015) and Schrock et al. (2021), recent developments in literature, especially in positive psychology, has changed the view about the existing conceptualization of individual performance which stresses the significance of not only averting negative reinforcements but also on endorsing the value of positive ones like engagement.

According to Plank, Reid, Koppitsch, and Meyer (2018), most of the previous research on salesforce supervision dealt with the evaluation and communication with a salesforce. Authors also pointed out decisively that future research should focus on how supervisors use their influence in their relationships with salespeople and ought to explore its impact on salespersons' engagement and performance. According to Moncrieff (2017), there is an emergence of a high concentration of reviews and empirical work over the years on sales, but still, much of our sales knowledge hinges on models

and assumptions that are no longer relevant or at least not as pervasive. In a situation where customers commonly exhibit a variety of complex buying behaviors and demand high-value services, the role of supervisors to encourage salespersons and generate positive outcomes from them remains a burning research issue in the sales management domain. Past research on the drivers of salespersons' work engagement can be grouped mainly into organizational-level variables and individual-level variables. Also, outcomes of salespersons' work engagement have been somewhat less extensively studied than the drivers of work engagement (Khusainova, de Jong, Lee, Marshall, & Rudd, 2018).

Owing to the conceptual budge regarding performance, researchers have recently extended their efforts and embarked on investigating work engagement as a prime variable of interest and offered theoretical models which examined some predictors and outcomes of work engagement concurrently in a single model. There is research evidence that engaged employees perform better, but at the same time, little is known about the significance of work engagement in explaining the behavioral performance (Eldor & Harpaz, 2016) of salespeople. At the same time, organizations now are more interested in work engagement and psychological resources (Dóci et al., 2020) and keen to make use of this new concept to leverage high performance (Munyon et al. 2021), as observed in the case of knowledge-driven firms where highly skilled and knowledgeable sales representatives interact with customers (doctors in case of pharmaceutical firms).

Supervisors/field managers in pharmaceutical firms play an instrumental role in holding talent by working with and recognizing the psychology of the salespeople and inspiring them to carry out their selling jobs in an improved manner. As it has been already established that supervisory support is a crucial driver of work engagement (Feng Jiang, Su Lu, Haijiang Wang, Xiji Zhu & Weipeng Lin, 2020), the tangible support (a form of supervisory support) from the supervisors in the form of assistance has a more significant effect on workers' behaviors (Emily Joy Haa, 2020) because it offers both the direction and ground for how salespeople can perform better. Moreover, there is an agreement between the researchers and the managers that work engagement is a critical success factor for achieving individual and as well as business outcomes.

We argue that explaining the relationship between perceived supervisory support and salespersons' work engagement is crucial, but the empirical investigation of relationships between supervisory support and the dimensions of work engagement to refine the theory is much needed. The current debate on performance discloses the reality that the performance of salespeople is a multi-dimensional construct, and significant gaps remain to be bridged. This study addresses the following research question: To what extent does the perceived supervisory support associated with work engagement and to what degree do these dimensions predict salespersons' performance?

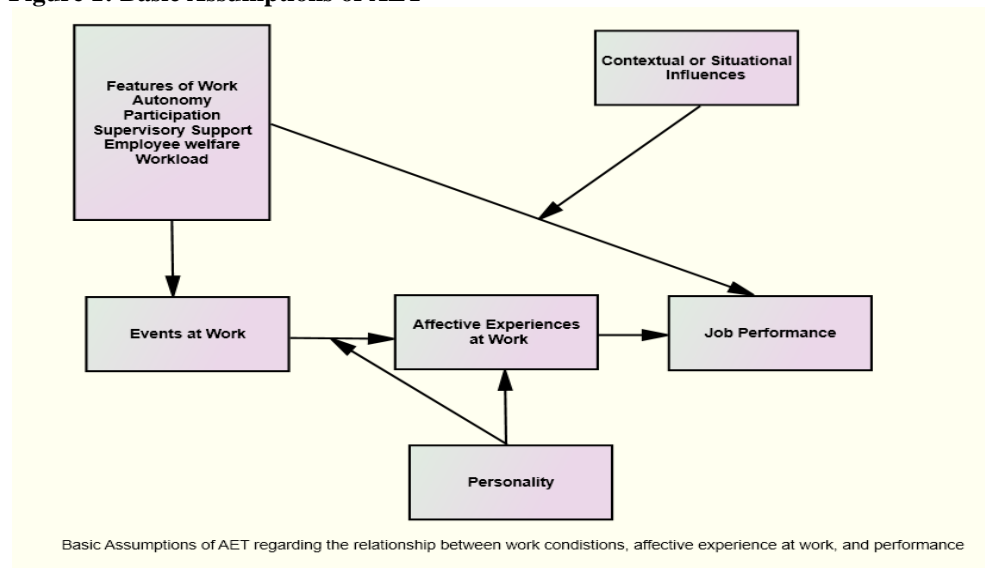
The study's objective was to address a significant gap in the existing empirical studies about the association of perceived supervisory support with the three dimensions of work engagement and the relationships of these dimensions with two different dimensions of performance. Most of the studies have used a summative index of dimensions of engagement as an outcome and overlooked the reality that perceived supervisory support could have different effects across different salespersons' work engagement dimensions. The present study, as a result, advances the previous research in this domain. The cavernous insight regarding these relationships is crucial, as supervisors

could prioritize and adopt more meaningful actions to attain better results. This type of investigation has received diminutive attention so far.

II. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses Development

Sales management researchers have long been acknowledged the importance of supervisors/managers in managing salespersons, equipping them with required levels of sales skills, encouraging and inducing appropriate behaviors through suitable supervisory interventions like continuous feedback and support (Gabler & Hill, 2015; Julia Muntz & Christian Dormann, 2020). Babin and Boles (1996) defined supervisory support as ‘the extent to which subordinates perceive that supervisors proffer support, give self-confidence and demonstrate concerns. According to Eisenberger et al. (2002), support from immediate supervisors is the perception of employees that supervisors are concerned about their well-being and give importance to their efforts and contributions towards work. In this regard, Cheng, Lu, Chang, and Johnstone (2013) note that cooperative relationships between supervisors and subordinates influence subordinates’ level of work engagement. In the pharmaceutical selling context, supervisors play a crucial role in minimizing the work stresses and helping salespeople get involved with their field responsibilities. Generally, the profitability crises in many sales organizations result from incompatible or terrible selling techniques employed by the salesforce and the lack of supervisory support.

Figure 1: Basic Assumptions of AET



According to Delaney and Royal (2017), the construct of engagement comprises constituent fragments; authors consider an ample opportunity to uncover the construct of engagement by focusing on those ingredients. Since the construct of work engagement is relatively new in the research arena, and a diverse set of conceptualizations of work engagement exists in the literature, the basic concept revolves around employees’ effective and positive relationship with their work. According to Mills, Culbertson, and Fullagar (2012), work engagement revolves around energy, positive experience,

participation, and efficacy that employees bring to their work. The construct of engagement is unique and different from commitment and involvement (Albrecht, 2012; Bakker, Albrecht & Leiter, 2011). At the same time, others believe that work engagement is not different and is only a new wrapping of the old concept of involvement.

The conceptual precedence assumed for this research does not aim to reject the significance of other proximal and distal antecedents to work engagement and salespersons' performance. Still, for the sake of prudence, we focused only on perceived supervisory support because of the close connection that exists between salespersons and supervisors in the pharmaceutical selling context.

A. Supervisory Support and Work Engagement

It has long been recognized that employees value instrumental and emotional support from their immediate supervisors. Employees' feedback on their work, career guidance, and opportunities' horizons tend to exalt their involvement more in their work-related activities. There is a plethora of research showing that one of the social support variables, such as perceived supervisory support, is predictive of work engagement (e.g., Antoinette Bargagliotti, 2012; Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter 2011; Edmondson & Boyer, 2013; Feng Jiang, Su Lu, Haijiang Wang, Xiji Zhu & Weipeng Lin, 2020). AET is a unified theory for explaining the relationship between perceived supervisory support and work engagement in pharmaceutical fieldwork. Since sales' jobs in the pharmaceutical industry are filled with different daily events, it is not shocking that these events impact the salespeople differently (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008). The AET links one of the affective events, i.e. (supervisory support) with the emotional reactions, i.e. (work engagement). Based on these confirmations from previous research and the theoretical arguments based on AET, we forwarded the following hypotheses:

- H_{1a}: A higher perceived level of supervisory support leads to a higher level of vigor.
- H_{1b}: Salespersons' perception of high supervisory support leads to higher levels of dedication.
- H_{1c}: Perceived supervisory support has a positive relationship with the felt state of absorption.

B. Work Engagement and Performance

Over the past decade, work engagement has received significant consideration in the organizational literature (Jeske, Sheehan, Linehan, & Moran, 2017; Junça-Silva, Caetano, & Lopes, 2017) because of its positive effect on workers' work-related outcomes (Robijn et al., 2020; Tino Lesener, Burkhard Gusy, Anna Jochmann & Christine Wolter, 2020). Consider that both dimensions of performance i.e. selling and non-selling of behavioral performance are crucial to pharmaceutical selling jobs. According to Lee et al. (2019), work engagement mediates the relationships between supervisory coaching and performance feedback on turnover intention. Extending the work on these linkages Khan et al. (2020) explored the positive link between interactional monitoring and salesperson's engagement, leading to increased performance. Based on the premise provided by AET, we suggest that work engagement will increase salespersons' performance. This configuration has yet to be empirically verified in the pharmaceutical selling context. Therefore, as a subsequent step in advancing research, we propose that three different dimensions of work engagement are positively related to two

different dimensions of performance, resulting in the development of the following hypotheses:

- H_{2a}: As salespersons' vigor increases, selling behavioral performance will also increase.
- H_{2b}: As salespersons' vigor increases, non-selling behavioral performance will also increase.
- H_{3a}: The more dedicated salespersons are, the higher the selling behavioral performance.
- H_{3b}: The more dedicated salespersons are, the higher the non-selling behavioral performance.
- H_{4a}: Salespersons who rate high on absorption will demonstrate higher selling behavioral performance.
- H_{4b}: Salespersons who rate high on absorption will demonstrate higher non-selling behavioral performance.

III. Methods

The top 100 pharmaceutical companies (in revenue terms) were selected and segregated into 24 multinational and 76 national firms. Overall, 1500 questionnaires were sent to potential respondents belonging to sampled pharmaceutical firms via the Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturing Association (PPMA), of which 803 responded. The final data comprised 619 usable questionnaires, of which 608 were from males and 11 from female representatives. We adopted measures for perceived supervisory support from Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley's (1990) study and was operationalized as a provision of career guidance extended by supervisor (3 items), regular performance feedback (2 items), assignment of challenging work (2 items), and provision of work opportunities (2 items) on 5-point Likert scale anchored with strongly disagree =1 and strongly agree = 5. The higher the scores reported by the respondents, the higher their perception was about the support extended by the supervisor. The measures were best suited considering the operationalization of variables as compared to another measure available in the literature to capture the perception regarding support from supervisors in the pharmaceutical context. We averaged the responses of 9 items to confine the construct to the first order for the study.

Work engagement was measured from the scale of Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, & Bakker (2002). Pharmaceutical salespersons are being required to employ a transmutation from a simple stimulus-response selling model to a convincing selling deliberated to build brand predilection and to encourage the preferred prescriptive behaviors of doctors. The interaction style with doctors and the level of familiarity with scientific knowledge needed to attain the desired level of commitment from doctors and engagement levels (within) needed to exhibit higher performance build a condition in which assessment of a salesperson's performance is expected to become tricky. These complexities may show the way to decompose the global construct of performance into selling and non-selling behavioral performance. Two performance dimensions were measured by adopting the scale from Behrman and Perreault's (1982) study. Numerous studies have employed selective items from Behrman and Perreault to signify both pertinent characteristics and holistic measures of salespersons' performance

IV. Results and Preliminary Analyses

The assumptions of normality for multivariate analysis are fulfilled by using the results of correlation, skewness kurtosis, and Q-Q plots, as shown in Table-1.

Table 1: Construct Properties (N= 619)

	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis		Tolerance	VIF
					Statistic	S.E	Statistic	S.E		
PSS	9.00	42.00	27.98	5.85	-0.54	0.09	0.01	0.19	0.58	1.72
VG	5.00	20.00	16.59	2.69	-0.79	0.09	0.66	0.19	0.51	1.96
DD	5.00	25.00	19.03	4.19	-0.56	0.09	-0.02	0.19	0.52	1.90
AB	8.00	30.00	21.01	3.61	0.63	0.09	-0.32	0.19	0.54	1.85
SBP	5.00	25.00	16.56	4.39	-0.14	0.09	-0.18	0.19	Dependent Variable	
NSBP	4.00	20.00	13.44	4.00	-0.23	0.09	-0.86	0.19	Dependent Variable	

Notes: PSS= Perceived supervisory Support; VG= Vigor; DD= Dedication; AB= Absorption; SBP= Selling Behavioral Performance; NSBP= Non-Selling Behavioral Performance; SD= Standard Deviation; SE= Standard Error; VIF= Variance Inflationary Factor

A. Measure Validation

Reliability and Unidimensionality

It is a required step that validation of the items of each latent variable should be analyzed before hypothesis testing. Items should be unidimensional and should have one principle construct. Items reliability shows that items of a variable are free from error, whereas validity exhibits that items are measured what was expected to measure. Subsequently, the scale unidimensionality was tested with individual Confirmatory factor Analysis (CFA) as well as with nested CFA. Numerous goodness-of-fit indices were used as suggested in the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) literature, e.g. (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2005) such as Chi-square ration (χ^2/df), Goodness of fit index (GFI), Normed fit index (NFI), Comparative fit index (CFI), Root mean residual (RMR), and Root mean square error approximation (RMSEA). Table 2 presents the construct's unidimensionality, validity, and reliability of indicators.

All the factor loadings of the latent constructs (Table-2) were greater than the threshold value of 0.50 and significant, along with NFI values ≥ 0.90 , which supported the convergent validity of the scales as mandated by Anderson and Gerbing (1988).

Table 2: Results of Individual CFA (N=619)

Constructs	Items	χ^2/df	Unidimensionality				Convergent Validity		Reliability
			GFI	CFI	RMR	RMSEA	NFI	FL [min-max]	α
PSS	8	1.45	0.98	0.98	0.02	0.02	0.96	[0.50-0.61]	0.79
VG	4	1.02	0.99	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.99	[0.63-0.75]	0.81
DD	5	2.45	0.99	0.99	0.01	0.04	0.99	[0.74-0.83]	0.88
AB	5	0.76	0.99	1.00	0.00	0.00	0.99	[0.54-0.69]	0.78
SBP	4	0.34	1.00	1.00	0.00	0.00	1.00	[0.60-0.84]	0.80
NSBP	4	2.02	0.99	0.99	0.00	0.04	0.99	[0.66-0.85]	0.86

Notes: PSS= Perceived supervisory Support; VG= Vigor; DD= Dedication; AB= Absorption; PER= Performance; SBP= Selling Behavioral Performance; NSBP= Non Selling Behavioral Performance; GFI= Goodness of fit index; CFI= Comparative fit index; RMR= Root mean square residual; RMSEA= Root mean square error approximation; NFI= Normed fit; FL= Factor loadings; α = Cronbach's alpha.*Items PF2, VG3, VG4, AB4 deleted in CFA due to lower factor loadings

We applied Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) approach to SEM. To do so, scale fit indices and factor loading needed to be checked. We also employed a six-factor nested

confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to assess the unidimensionality, validity, and reliability of the measures for the sets of latent constructs (i.e., supervisory support, work engagement, and performance). A covariance matrix was used to find the results of the nested CFA. Table 2 indicates that the values of Cronbach's Alfa are ≥ 0.7 , which confirms that the items are reliable and free of error. The GFI, CFI, and NFI values also showed acceptable values ≥ 0.90 . Whereas, RMR and RMSEA values are ≤ 0.05 . The results of this process indicated that the data was overall fit to move further for analysis.

Table 3: Six Factors Nested CFA (N=619)

Indicators	Unidimensionality			Convergent Validity			Reliability	
	χ^2/df	GFI	CFI	RMR	RMS	NFI	FL [min-max]	α
30	1.93	0.92	0.95	0.03	0.03	0.91	[0.54-0.82]	0.93

Notes: χ^2 = Chi Square; df= Degree of freedom; NFI= Normal Fit Index; CFI= Comparative Fit Index; RMR= Root mean square residual; RMSEA= Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; FL= Factor Loadings; α = Cronbach's alpha.

The discriminant validity was established by comparing the chi-square difference test. According to Zait and Berteau (2011), we can establish discriminant validity by comparing the two models, i.e. (uncorrelated with correlated model); if both the models are significant, the constructs are said to have discriminant validity. Table 4 shows the statistics of both the uncorrelated (Model-1) and correlated (Model-2) and the differences between the two models.

Table 4 : Discriminant Validity (N=619)

Model-1 Uncorrelated			Model-2 Correlated			Difference		
$\chi^2_1=2583.22$	df1=405	$p=0.000$	$\chi^2_2=755.51$	df2=390	$p=0.000$	$\chi^2_1-\chi^2_2=1827.71$	df1-df2=15	

Notes: χ^2 = Chi Square; df= Degree of freedom; $\chi^2_1-\chi^2_2$ = Chi square difference; df1-df2=Difference in degrees of freedom

Table 5: Correlations among Latent Variables (N=619)

Constructs	PSS	VG	DD	AB	SBP	NSBP
PSS	1	0.55**	0.58**	0.51**	0.37**	0.42**
VG		1	0.58**	0.61**	0.38**	0.44**
DD			1	0.56**	0.56**	0.59**
AB				1	0.50**	0.53**
SBP					1	0.75**
NSBP						1

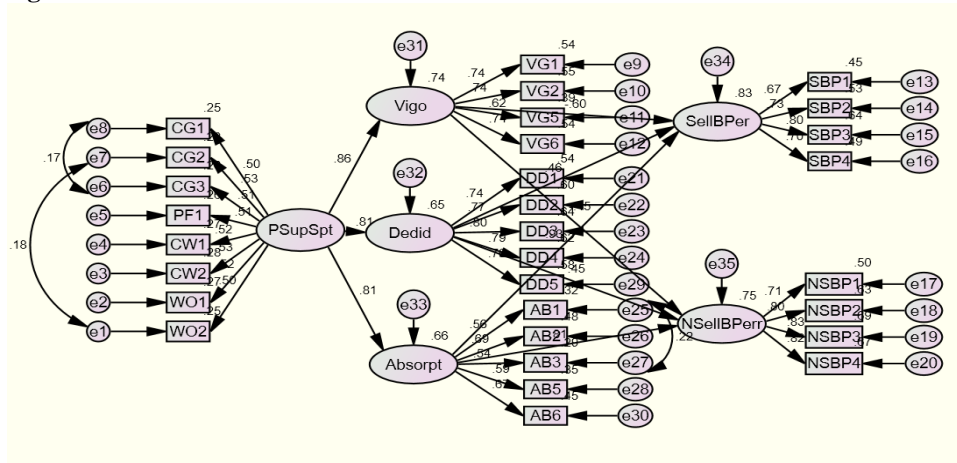
Notes: PSS= Perceived Supervisory Support; VG= Vigor; DD= Dedication; AB= Absorption; SBP= Selling Behavioral Performance; NSBP= Non-Selling Behavioral Performance; ** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As seen in Table-5 PSS and VG are positively correlated with each other ($r = 0.55^{**}$) whereas, PSS is positively correlated with DD and AB ($r = 0.58^{**}$, $r = 0.51^{**}$ respectively). Furthermore, PSS is positively correlated with SBP and NSBP ($r = 0.37^{**}$, $r = 0.42^{**}$ respectively). VG is positively correlated with DD ($r = 0.58^{**}$). Also VG is positively correlated with AB ($r = 0.61^{**}$). VG is also positively correlated with SBP and NSBP ($r = 0.38^{**}$, $r = 0.44^{**}$ respectively). DD is positively correlated with AB ($r = 0.56^{**}$). Also DD is positively correlated with SBP and NSBP ($r = 0.56^{**}$, $r = 0.59^{**}$ respectively). AB is positively correlated with SBP and NSBP ($r = 0.50^{**}$, $r = 0.53^{**}$ respectively). Lastly, SBP is positively correlated with NSBP ($r = 0.75^{**}$).

Structural Model (Hypotheses Testing)

PSS was modeled as a composite variable with dimensions in isolation. We modeled work engagement in three dimensions, i.e. VG, DD, and AB, and salespersons' performance, with two dimensions, i.e. SBP and NSBP. To assess the structural model's fitness again, the above-mentioned goodness-of-fit indices were used.

Figure 1: Path Model



The path model provided a good fit ($\chi^2/df= 2.53$, RMR= 0.04, GFI=0.90, Base line comparisons' indices are NFI=0.90, and CFI= 0.92. Parsimony-adjusted measures are RMSEA=0.05.

Table 6: Structural Model Results (N=619)

Effects	Hypothesized Path	β	S.E	P-value	Conclusion
Hypothesis 1a	PSS→ VG	0.86	0.08	0.001***	Supported
Hypothesis 1b	PSS→ DD	0.81	0.09	0.001***	Supported
Hypothesis 1c	PSS→ AB	0.81	0.07	0.001***	Supported
Hypothesis 2a	VG→ SBP	-0.53	0.08	0.001***	Not Supported
Hypothesis 2b	VG→ NSBP	-0.41	0.07	0.001***	Not Supported
Hypothesis 3a	DD→ SBP	0.56	0.06	0.001***	Supported
Hypothesis 3b	DD→ NSBP	0.53	0.06	0.001***	Supported
Hypothesis 4a	AB→ SBP	0.75	0.01	0.001***	Supported
Hypothesis 4b	AB→ NSBP	0.68	0.11	0.001***	Supported

Notes: PSS= Perceived Supervisory Support; VG= Vigor; DD= Dedication; AB= Absorption; SBP= Selling Behavioral Performance; NSBP= Non-Selling Behavioral Performance; SE= Standard Error; *** p < .001

V. Discussion on Results

H_{1a} postulated that a higher perceived level of supervisory support leads to a higher level of vigor. The direct path from perceived supervisory support to vigor has a significant regression weight, i.e. ($\beta= 0.86, p= 0.001$) hence H_{1a} is accepted. H_{1b} stated that salespersons' perception of high supervisory support leads to higher levels of dedication, the path coefficient shows ($\beta= 0.81, p= 0.001$), hence H_{1b} is also accepted. H_{1c} postulated that perceived supervisory support positively correlates with the felt state of absorption. Results show ($\beta= 0.81, p= 0.001$) for H_{1c}, hence, hypothesis is also accepted. H_{2a} and H_{2b} stated that as salespersons' vigor increases, selling behavioral performance

will also increase, and as salespersons' vigor increases, non-selling behavioral performance will also increase. Results does not provide support for H_{2a} ($\beta = -0.53$, $p = 0.001$), and H_{2b} ($\beta = -0.41$, $p = 0.001$). Hence, both hypotheses are rejected. H_{3a} and H_{3b} postulated that the more dedicated salespersons are, the higher the selling behavioral performance. The more dedicated salespersons are, the higher the non-selling behavior. Hypotheses H_{3a} ($\beta = 0.56$, $p = 0.001$), and H_{3b} ($\beta = 0.53$, $p = 0.001$) are also supported. Regarding H_{4a} and H_{4b} we found support like for H_{4a} ($\beta = 0.75$, $p = 0.001$) and H_{4b} ($\beta = 0.68$, $p = 0.001$). Results from the statistical analysis also provided the squared multiple correlations (R^2) for each endogenous variable. As shown from the model presented in figure-1, large proportions of the variance in study variables are explained. PSS explains 74% of the variance in VG. 65% in DD and 66% in AB, as far as the three dimensions, i.e. VG, DD, and AB are concerned; all of these three dimensions of work engagement explained 83% variance in SBP and 75% in NSBP.

VI. Conclusion

AET highlights that daily uplifts arouse positive effects on workers. Based on the premise of AET, we extended the current knowledge about the antecedent of work engagement along with its consequences. The findings contribute to our understanding of linkages proposed in the conceptual model. Precisely, the results of the study suggest that the perceived supervisory support, i.e., one of the constituents of daily uplifts, is associated with the three dimensions of work engagement, i.e., vigor, dedication, and absorption, and these three dimensions are linked positively with the two dimensions of salespersons' performance, i.e., selling behavioral and non-selling behavioral performance. The overall results are consistent with the AET explanations and previous research. Jose and Mampilly (2015) and Suan and Nasurdin (2013) showed in their study that daily uplifts are positively associated with well-being (Han, Sung, and Suh 2021) and the performance of employees. Swanberg et al. (2011) and Dimitrova and van Hooff (2021) supported this positive relationship between supervisory support and well-being. This study also agrees with previous research that demonstrated a positive relationship between work engagement and performance. The results of our study allow us to conclude that perceived supervisory support is a proximal factor for engagement and a distal factor for performance.

The pharmaceutical industry is a highly competitive and rapidly changing industry. Salespersons are the prime capital of any organization that not only helps to improve the organizational performance but also helps to increase the market share. Considering this, it is important to lift the individual performance of salespersons. Perception of supervisory support is an important factor that influences work engagement which in turn influences the performance of the salespeople. The present study helps operational level management (field managers) to understand the significance of support in achieving organizational goals through creating salespersons' work engagement.

This study contributes to the literature in different ways. The present study is mapped based on the prepositions of AET that link supervisory support with work engagement and further with performance. Consistent with the AET theory, the study found that perception of supervisory support is linked with two dimensions of work engagement, and these two dimensions are linked with performance. This confirms the basic premise of AET. The study extended the literature on perceived supervisory support

and engagement. Moreover, the study's results are in line with previous research on the antecedents of engagement.

The findings of the study led to three potential practical implications. First, the organization must conduct training programs to train and develop an attitude of extending support among field managers. Secondly, field managers need to understand the importance of work engagement which in turn influences performance significantly, thirdly, supervisors or field managers should give feelings of care and value in order to provide these positive outcomes. Moreover, the supervisor should focus on improving the quality of their relationship with their subordinates.

The study is one of the initiatives to find the relationships between perceived supervisory support and the three dimensions of work engagement, leaving certain areas to be covered by future research. Further studies should focus on the indirect effects of these dimensions of work engagement upon relationships between perceived supervisory support and the two dimensions of salespersons' performance using the AET approach. Other factors such as personality traits and emotional contagion should also be explored as moderators between the variables to dig and drill more into this phenomenon. This study used a cross-sectional design and subjective measures of performance. As such, future studies should better use longitudinal data to establish causality and objective performance measures to obtain a more objective evaluation of performance.

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