



A systematic literature review of negative psychological states and behaviors in sales

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ABSTRACT

In sales settings, negativity typically manifests in two forms. *Negative psychological states* (NpS), such as stress, burnout, and/or depression can result from sales activities. *Negative sales behaviors* are actions counter to the expected behaviors associated with the sales role. Both NpS and negative behaviors lead to reduced performance and disengaged employees. Yet, despite their importance, no single analysis of how these various negative topics are related exists. Thus, the present research utilizes the systematic literature review approach to investigate NpS and behaviors in sales settings. The present research contributes to the literature in four main ways, through: (1) explication of forty-nine salient constructs; (2) identification of NpS and behaviors construct roles in prior research; (3) systematic review of past research and trends; and (4) presenting a comprehensive set of future research opportunities.

“The cost of having a non-team (negative) player can be catastrophic. They can poison the (sales) team, undermine morale, create division, and in the end, they almost always cost you.”

1. Introduction

The preceding Forbes quote (Keenan, 2015) reflects that negativity in a sales environment is rarely to be desired. Negativity in sales typically manifests either as a psychological state or as a behavior (often with the state leading to the behavior). Negative psychological states (NpS¹), such as stress, burnout, and/or depression can be the result of sales activities (Lewin & Sager, 2007). For example, it is estimated that up to 50 percent of salespeople fail to reach their annual sales targets, which can propagate NpS (Ahearne, Haumann, Kraus, & Wieseke, 2013). In addition, the practitioner press highlights NpS as a cause of anxiety and burnout that affects work performance across sales settings (Pink, 2012). These NpS often lead to negative behaviors that can cause

problems within and outside the sales organization. The present research investigates the broad and diverse set of NpS and associated behaviors.

NpS in sales describes the internal make-up of a salesperson's thoughts and perceptions. By summarizing past work on myriad manifestations of NpS in sales research, we characterize the broader topic of NpS as cognitive, affective, and behavioral attitudes that are detrimental to salespeople and/or their employing organizations. The topic is timely as continuous changes in sales have led to increasing job demands, more demanding customers, and product complexities (e.g., Hartmann, Wieland, & Vargo, 2018; Plouffe, Bolander, Cote, & Hochstein, 2016). Increasing job demands are associated with NpS (i.e., anxiety) in 60 percent of salespeople (Belschak, Verbeke, & Bagozzi, 2006). NpS, although not a necessary condition for negative behaviors, quite often influence negative behaviors in sales. Therefore, understanding NpS among salespeople is crucial for organizations to remain productive in the competitive marketplace.

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¹ The case-sensitive acronym NpS is used in lieu of negative psychological states, in an effort to differentiate it from the upper-case acronym NPS, which is commonly used acronym for net promoter score.

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Negative sales behaviors are actions by salespeople that run counter to the expected behaviors associated with the sales role. For example, Strout (2002) found that 47% of sales managers believe their salespeople lie on sales calls and other reports suggest that almost 40 percent of salespeople act in an “inappropriate manner” when selling. These behaviors, such as deceiving customers and/or withholding information, are a major issue for managers (Darrat, Amyx, & Bennett, 2010). Wells Fargo provides an example of negative sales behavior, as many of the firm’s salespeople engaged in a variety of negative behaviors, including opening fraudulent accounts and ordering unapproved services for millions of customers (Glazer, 2016). The example of Wells Fargo illustrates how a high-pressure and dynamic sales environment can engender negative behaviors, and potentially NpS (Glazer, 2016). Overall, both NpS and negative behaviors have detrimental effects on firm sustainability (Jelinek & Ahearne, 2006).

Given the importance and the lack of comprehensive investigations of NpS and behaviors, the current study systematically reviews NpS and behaviors² in the sales literature. Numerous articles have been published in recent decades investigating these topics in sales (the current study identifies 232 studies since 1995); as a comprehensive review that summarizes the scope of this domain does not exist. To address this deficiency in the literature, the aim of this study is to provide a holistic understanding of salesperson NpS and behaviors. We contribute to the literature by identifying NpS and behaviors that adversely affect sales performance. Specifically, we contribute to the literature via (1) explication of forty-nine salient constructs; (2) identification of NpS and behaviors construct roles in prior research; (3) systematic review of past research and trends; and (4) presenting a comprehensive set of future research opportunities.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. We begin our systematic review by building our theoretical foundations and formally defining NpS and behaviors in sales. We then provide a detailed description of our systematic literature review methodology by clearly outlining our inclusion/exclusion criteria, and an overview of our study featuring a systematic analysis of the findings. The results of our research focus on summarizing and drawing insights from how past research has guided study of the topic. We specifically focus on constructs, theories, implications, and future research directions of prior research on NpS in sales. Finally, we outline salient implications of the study for both sales researchers and practitioners.

2. Theoretical foundation and background

2.1. Negative psychological states

Since the mid 1990s, the broad topic of NpS, has emerged as an important area of study. In the workplace literature, many manifestations of NpS have been explored (e.g. anxiety, burnout, and felt stress). Sales researchers have examined various NpS including role ambiguity (Boles, Wood, & Johnson, 2003), role stress (Ackfeldt & Malhotra, 2013), anxiety (Verbeke & Bagozzi, 2000), and burnout (Ambrose, Rutherford, Shepherd, & Tashchian, 2014). However, despite differences, all share a common emphasis on the actual/potential harmful effects such states have on salespeople, customers, and organizations (Darrat et al., 2010; Mulki, Jaramillo, Goad, & Pesquera, 2015). To unify this literature, we systematically describe and categorize these diverse topics into a common set.

The current study focuses solely on those NpS that were found to have a significant influence on sales performance or wellbeing. Past literature in sales has examined NpS and several factors leading to NpS as well as outcomes (Fournier, Weeks, Blocker, & Chonko, 2013; Shepherd, Tashchian, & Ridnour, 2011; Tarafdar, Bolman Pullins, & Ragu-Nathan, 2014). The changing sales environment, high competition, increased relational expectations, and frustrating working

conditions (Jones, Brown, Zoltners, & Weitz, 2005; Plouffe et al., 2016) are some of the reasons for the rise of NpS and general negativity among salespeople (Watson, Clark, & Carey, 1988). Previous studies have found that individuals with high levels of NpS are more likely to underperform as compared to those experiencing low levels of negativity (Bagozzi, Baumgartner, Pieters, & Zeelenberg, 2000). In other words, individuals with high NpS tend to perceive the “glass as half-empty” (Penney & Spector, 2005) and are likely to have reduced performance. Common occurrence of NpS among salespeople can have a tremendous impact in terms of reduced performance, loss of productivity, loss of customers, increased turnover, absenteeism, reduced salesperson well-being, and job dissatisfaction (Johnson, Griffeth, & Griffin, 2000). Overall, it is commonly agreed that NpS are detrimental to the sales firm (Fournier et al., 2013; Shepherd et al., 2011).

2.2. NpS and negative behaviors

The relationship between negativity and performance is explained by the concept of “affect management.” In essence, individuals who experience NpS are prone to react by engaging in negative (counterproductive) behaviors. Thus, NpS cause more problems than just reduced performance. Studies have shown that when salespeople experience NpS they also demonstrate negative behaviors (Jelinek & Ahearne, 2006; Tarafdar et al., 2014). For example, NpS threaten salesperson well-being, resulting in reduced sales performance (Fournier et al., 2013). In addition, NpS influence customers (O’Brien, Hill, & Autry, 2009) through behaviors, such as hostility and withholding information (Valentine, Fleischman, & Godkin, 2015). Finally, NpS impacts individuals in the organization, and/or the organization itself (Boshoff & Mels, 1995) through behaviors such as inefficiency, intentionally slow work, and/or work avoidance (Hochstein, Lilly, & Stanley, 2017). The experience of NpS and behaviors is likely to differ between salespeople, as psychological perspectives are unique to each individual. For example, there are physiological as well as psychological factors that account for some of this difference as the way in which the brain handles negative information leading to different interpretations between individuals (Hemenover, Augustine, Shulman, Tran, & Barlett, 2008). Past research in psychology also contends that negative experiences are subject to wide individual differences (Davidson, Jackson, & Kalin, 2000; Hemenover, 2003). However, despite individual differences, salespeople are impacted by NpS and behaviors in some form, as are represented in the studies and results included in our research. Thus, the present research next describes its process to provide a systematic overview of the NpS and behaviors literature to aid scholars and managers interested in a holistic view of the dark side of sales practice.

3. Method

To understand the topic of NpS and behaviors within the sales literature, a systematic literature review was conducted. We chose the systematic literature review (SLR) methodology as it provides “collective insights through theoretical synthesis into fields and sub-fields” (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003, p.220). A SLR is an effective method for systematically and critically evaluating a body of literature in a rigorous way and this method leads to a robust conclusion of what is existing and unknown in an area (Christofi, Leonidou, & Vrontis, 2017; Denyer & Tranfield, 2009). According to Boell and Cecez-Kecmanovic (2015), SLRs are commonly conceived as being efficient, reproducible, objective, transparent, unbiased, and rigorous. Using the SLR has many advantages as compared to narrative reviews. The SLR increases validity of the process by making the ideas and assumptions more explicit and minimizing error and bias (Palmatier, Houston, & Hulland, 2018). Furthermore, SLR synthesizes the data and maps the literature in a specific way, which leads to an integrated framework of the domain under investigation (Christofi et al., 2017; Dada, 2018; Kauppi, Salmi, & You, 2018). SLR is a method commonly used across a variety of topics,

² Henceforth, “NpS and behaviors” will be used in conjunction with NpS to denote the overall concept of our research, which is negative psychological states and negative behaviors.

such as marketing strategy (Morgan, Whitler, Feng, & Chari, 2019), salesperson motivation (Khusainova, de Jong, Lee, Marshall, & Rudd, 2018), service innovation (Witell, Snyder, Gustafsson, Fombelle, & Kristensson, 2016), internationalization (Vrontis & Christofi, 2019) and key account management (Guesalaga & Johnston, 2010). Thus, we follow the established procedure of the SLR to provide a comprehensive overview of the sales research on NpS and behaviors and their impact.

3.1. Search protocol

3.1.1. Article search process

Our SLR is focused on negative aspects of selling. We follow a similar process as suggested by Nguyen, de Leeuw, and Dullaert (2018) when developing the research focus of the study. A dialogue between the members of the research team was initiated and after discussion, our research question emerged as “What are the negative psychological states and behaviors prevalent among salespeople?” We then set the inclusion criteria of which studies to include in the SLR. The inclusion criteria entailed (1) determining the search boundaries, (2) identifying the search string, and (3) specifying the search timeframe as 1995–2019. Recent SLRs have used 1995 as an ideal starting point that allows the review to investigate recent research on a topic over a twenty (or more) year range that coincides with internet related changes to the workplace (Kienzler & Kowalkowski, 2017; Looock & Hinnen, 2015). Other researchers focus on the period after seminal papers that direct research in a topical area (Ben Slimane, Chaney, Humphreys, & Leca, 2019; Dada, 2018). We choose 1995, as our starting point because the time span has a sufficient range to allow investigation of a large body of recent research and coincides with seminal papers on NpS in sales (Robinson & Bennett, 1995; Sager & Wilson, 1995; Stratton, Pelton, & Lumpkin, 1995).

3.1.2. Inclusion criteria

We followed the Christofi et al. (2017)'s search process for our SLR. First, the title, abstract, and keyword fields (utilizing Business Source Ultimate and Scopus) were searched for the keywords “sales,” “selling,” “salesperson,” “salespeople,” “frontline,” and all possible combinations of the search terms to find relevant studies. The initial search criteria yielded (n = 50,121) articles. Although there is work in the domain of NpS and behaviors among general employees, the focus of our SLR is exclusive to the sales domain. Sales work is different from non-sales work and happens in a unique environment³. The sales keywords allow us to only search within sales articles (Moncrief, Marshall, & Watkins, 2000). Past SLRs in sales have applied this criterion to ensure the contribution is focused on the extant body of sales literature (Khusainova et al., 2018).

3.1.3. Exclusion criteria

The initial articles were further evaluated based on our exclusion criteria. First, like other SLRs (e.g., Nguyen et al., 2018; Dada, 2018), we only included publications in peer reviewed academic journals. Thus, we eliminated articles from such outlets as, trade journals, conference proceedings, book chapters, editorials, extended abstracts, magazines, and newspapers. Second, articles that were not in English were excluded. Third,

³ For a great review of the differences between sales vs. non-sales work environments, see Lewin and Sager (2007).

articles that were not in the selected outlets⁴ in line with Williams and Plouffe (2007) were also excluded. Our exclusion criteria reduced our list of sales related articles to a smaller set (n = 3895) of peer reviewed articles.

3.1.4. Selecting relevant articles with a focus on NpS and behaviors in sales

The use of inclusion and exclusion criteria helps to create clear boundaries allowing us to develop the specific group of articles that address the topic of the SLR (Kauppi et al., 2018). Given our focus on sales articles and NpS and/or behaviors, two members from the research team independently read each title, abstract, and the keywords for the 3895 articles to identify 369 potential articles. Then the full text of each article was reviewed to ensure that each included either NpS or behaviors. This process further eliminated 137 articles. Upon conclusion of the independent rater review, the research team compared final lists and addressed any discrepancies from the inclusion/exclusion process (28 articles were discussed, and coding was agreed upon). Our final set represents studies of NpS and behaviors as either an antecedent, outcome, moderator, or mediator specific to the context of sales. Ultimately, our final set includes 232 articles deemed appropriate to be included within the scope of our study.

3.2. Data coding

The next step followed the accepted SLR approach for investigating content of the 232 articles. Two coders, evaluated each article's individual content. Dimensions that followed Williams and Plouffe (2007) were coded to report the characteristics of the included manuscripts (article type, article topic, data collection method, sampled unit, research design, and data analysis method). To develop a comprehensive analysis for our study, the research team coded each article for sales setting, geographic setting, constructs (and their focal role in each article, e.g., mediator or moderator), and theories. Using this process, the trained coders (study authors) repeated the process for all 232 articles to arrive at a consistent coding outcome. Following the established procedure to confirm reliability, the robust and relatively conservative measure of inter-rater reliability, Cohen's kappa, was used to assess the coded data (Neuendorf, 2002). Cohen's kappa is an index with a value between 1 (perfect consensus between raters) and 0 (agreement is no better than chance). The Cohen's kappa reliabilities for the study's dimensions ranged from a high of 0.99 for “article type” to a low of 0.83 for “theoretical/conceptual foundation,” which are within SLR parameters (Krippendorff, 2004). The coders discussed the any remaining disagreements to arrive at consensus (procedure per Scandura & Williams, 2000).

4. Results

Table 1 reports the frequency, conceptual definitions, and key findings for forty-nine main constructs related to NpS and behaviors. The figure reports the role of these constructs in prior research, offering visual guidance of how many of the constructs within our SLR have been studied in past research. Fig. 1 in many cases identifies constructs in various roles (e.g., antecedent and moderator) with various frequencies found in prior sales research.

⁴ The journals surveyed were: Journal of Marketing (JM), Journal of Marketing Research (JMR), Marketing Science (MS), Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science (JAMS), Journal of Retailing (JR), Journal of Business Research (JBR), Journal of Business Ethics (JBE), Industrial Marketing Management (IMM), Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing (JBIM), Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management (JPSSM), European Journal of Marketing (EJM), International J of Research in Marketing (IJRM), Marketing Letters (ML), Psychology and Marketing (P&M), Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice (JMTP), and Marketing Intelligence and Planning (MIP), Journal of Applied Psychology (JAP).

Table 1
Negative Psychological States and Negative Behavior Construct Summary.

Construct	Definition	Key Articles	Findings/Comments	Practical Implications/Tackling Negativity
Negative State Abusive Supervision <i>Included in 2 Studies</i>	Perceptions of the extent to which supervisors engage in the sustained display of hostile verbal and nonverbal behaviors, excluding physical contact. (Tepper, 2000)	Gabler, Nagy, and Hill (2014)	Perceptions of procedural/ interactional justice, negative affectivity, authoritarianism, and abuse impact perceptions of abusive supervision.	Organizations motivate change and reward managers for being mindful and respectful. Encouragement of reduction in abusive behaviors through personal development programs.
Negative Behavior Aggressiveness <i>Included in 1 Study</i>	Defined as “physically demonstrative and/or intimidating behavior directed towards salespeople” when dealing with problems that salespeople cause (Lee & Cadogan, 2009, p. 3).	Micevski, Kadic-Maglajlic, Banerjee, Cadogan, and Lee (2017)	Can be beneficial for emotional wellbeing when salespeople accept manager’s motives, and be willing to stretch themselves and take on demanding workloads in the name of their personal growth	Only specific types and contexts are beneficial for managerial aggressiveness such as problem resolution situations. The right amount of aggressiveness, not too much and not too little which can be seen as positive aggression
Negative Behavior Anti-Citizenship Behavior <i>Included in 1 Study</i>	Overt salesperson behavior that is directly contrary to organizational expectations or policy - belligerent, assertive and observable. (Jelinek & Ahearne, 2006)	Jelinek and Ahearne (2006)	Organizational justice, intra firm competition, job stress, and organizational fit influence anti-citizenship behavior (ACB).	An understanding of the effects of ACB on the sales organization and the buyer–seller relationship prompts organizations to consider modifying management and control styles.
Negative State Anxiety <i>Included in 4 Studies</i>	A syndrome of interdependent cognitive and psychological components that result in protective actions. (Belschak et al., 2006)	Belschak et al. (2006)	Anxiety can hinder sales functioning. Perseverance and task concentration coping strategy are well suited to reduce anxiety.	Salespeople trained in a wide range of coping strategies. Role-play training and sales manager coaching to assist and train salespeople to overcome anxiety.
Negative State Attachment Anxiety <i>Included in 1 Study</i>	A state in which individuals worry that they will be alone in times of need and crave approval from peers and supervisors (Mende & Bolton, 2011).	Agnihotri, Vieira, Senra, and Gabler (2016)	It has a negative influence on salesperson interpersonal metalizing skills such as shaping interactions, detecting nonverbal cues and rapport building	Programs need to be designed to uncover and alleviate attachment anxiety among salespeople. Motivational tools, positive reinforcement, and rewards may help convey the sales manager’s trust in the salesperson
Negative State Burnout <i>Included in 12 Studies</i>	A multi-dimensional construct consisting of three facets: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment. (Ambrose et al., 2014)	Shepherd et al. (2011), Lewin and Sager (2008), Hollet-Haudebert, Mulki, and Fournier (2011)	Weak job performance, emotional exhaustion, accomplishments, and depersonalization. Job tension, role conflict, ambiguity and overload influence burnout.	Contributes to low productivity and turnover. Managers should mitigate burnout through adoption of a learning process, streamlining, educational programs, recruitment, training, and job design.
Negative Behavior (Sales) Complacency <i>Included in 1 Study</i>	A laxness by salespeople when servicing customers.	Friend and Johnson (2017)	Manifest in salespeople as: (a) response apathy (b) detachment, (c) inappropriate foci. Impacts the customer’s decision to defect from the relationship	Sales managers should be careful to identify and manage the negative effects of complacency. Managers should address perceived complacency, through fixed interval customer assessments.
Negative State Conflict <i>Included in 12 Studies</i>	The degree to which salespeople feel anger, frustration, hostility, and resentment toward their customers. See also “interpersonal conflict” and “inter-unit conflict.” (Chakrabarty, Brown, & Widing II, 2013)	Chakrabarty et al. (2013), Dixon, Gassenheimer, and Barr (2002)	Minimizing conflict will improve performance and enhance customer loyalty, while increasing levels of conflict can lead to dysfunction. Conflict plays a role in shaping team-selling outcomes.	Implications for trust of salesperson by customers, buyer–seller relationship quality, and restricts/ distorts flow of information. Disrupts congruency of salespeople in teams. Training to reduce conflict, training in conflict management, and conflict response behavior.
Negative (Offset) State Coping <i>Included in 13 Studies</i>	The strategy an individual adopts to minimize the harmful outcomes of a stressor. Coping has two components: dealing with the problem (problem-focused; i.e., PFC) and regulating emotional reactions (emotional-focused; i.e., EFC). (Lewin & Sager, 2009)	Nonis, Sager, and Kumar (1995), Liu, Chugh, and Noel Gould (2016)	Can have NpS characteristics, in addition to positive ones. Coping (PFC and EFC) can positively influence customer reacquisition. PFC affects job performance, emotional exhaustion, and turnover. EFC influences high helplessness and withdrawal.	EFC can lead to withdrawal and avoidance of customers, and often is interpreted as a negative life event. To avoid coping problems, sales training curriculum, policies, and support resources should be provided that build positive salesperson coping abilities.
Negative Behavior Co-worker Undermining <i>Included in 1 Study</i>	Intentional offenses by a co-worker(s) aimed at destroying a salesperson’s favorable reputation, her ability to accomplish sales-related work, or ability to build and maintain positive relationships. (Yoo & Frankwick, 2013)	Yoo and Frankwick (2013)	Influences emotional exhaustion and deviance behavior. The sales boundary-spanning role makes exposure to undermining more likely.	Managers need to check salesperson emotional stability and provide social support. Organizations need to stimulate motivation to reduce undermining in an effort to improve management of the customer-salesperson relationship across the salesforce.
Negative State Cynicism <i>Included in 2 Study</i>	An employee’s reaction to a firm’s violation of employment-related social exchange. (Johnson & O’Leary-Kelly, 2003)	Johnson and O’Leary-Kelly (2003)	Value congruence and inaccuracy of marketing is positively related to cynicism, which is negatively related to OC and job satisfaction.	Understanding the dysfunctional job attitudes fostered by external marketing of salespeople helps sales managers to develop better salesperson supervisory strategies.
	A dysfunctional coping mechanism induced by job-related stress that		Role conflict and ambiguity positively influence, while decision	Can influence variables such as org. commitment and turnover intentions.

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Table 1 (continued)

Construct	Definition	Key Articles	Findings/Comments	Practical Implications/Tackling Negativity
Negative State Depersonalization <i>Included in 5 Studies</i>	causes workers to become callous, distant, and negative toward others. Has also been labeled cynicism. (Ambrose et al., 2014).	Ambrose et al. (2014), Hollet-Haudebert et al. (2011)	latitude is negative. Depersonalization leads to callous, cynical, disconnected and distance from customers.	Makes salespeople feel alienated, leading to inefficiency. Organizations should reduce job isolation, social comparison and improve team cohesion.
Negative Behavior Dysfunctional Behavior <i>Included in 4 Studies</i>	This refers to employees intentionally acting in ways that hurt the organization or deviate from expected behaviors. (Choi, Dixon, & Jung, 2004)	Choi et al. (2004)	Output and activity information controls dysfunctional behavior. Capability information affects dysfunctional behavior through trust of supervisor.	Sales managers and supervisors are an effective vehicle for reducing dysfunctional behavior. Role trust and trust building processes reduce dysfunctional behavior.
Negative Behavior Dysfunctional Conflict <i>Included in 1 Study</i>	In the conventional sense, it is unhealthy, and associated with dysfunctional behaviors, dissatisfaction, and poor individual and/or group performance.	Arnott, Massey, and Dawes (2007)	Distortion, withholding of information and distrust during interactions. It also lowers cross-functional cooperation and coordination among individuals.	Increasing trust between managers reduces the behaviors associated with dysfunctional conflict.
Negative State Embarrassment <i>Included in 3 Studies</i>	Embarrassment is a reactive response arising from relatively trivial and humorous events. It dictates and constrains a great deal of social behaviour	Verbeke & Bagozzi, 2002	It leads to reduced opportunities for interaction and disruption of ongoing interactions and induces negative evaluations of salespeople by customers.	Training, role-plays, and practice can help salespeople learn to respond when faced with embarrassing situations to return the interaction to a functional and objective exchange of information.
Negative State Emotional Exhaustion <i>Included in 26 Studies</i>	When psychological resources have been depleted to the point that a worker is no longer able to work. Exhaustion represents the most obvious manifestation of the stress component of burnout. (Ambrose et al., 2014)	Boles, Johnston, and Hair (1997), Babakus, Cravens, Johnston, and Moncrief (1999), Ambrose et al. (2014)	Role ambiguity, conflict, and work family conflict cause emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion has a negative influence on org. commitment, job performance, intention to leave, and job satisfaction.	Early detection is critical. Then, provide supportive work environments and work/family balance to help build social networks and provide family friendly organizational initiatives that reduce emotional exhaustion.
Negative State Felt Shame <i>Included in 3 Studies</i>	Shame is an emotion that reflects a person's realization that her own intentional way of behaving during an interaction goes against the core self.	(Verbeke & Bagozzi, 2002)	Shame has physiological symptoms and feelings of threat that affect the core self. It negatively influences performance, communication effectiveness and relationship building.	Shame should be addressed by managers through helping employees to better understand their role and how to more effectively perform it.
Negative State Felt Stress <i>Included in 2 Studies</i>	A manifestation of stress, similar to emotional exhaustion, that occurs when a person faces psychological or emotional demands on his/her time and energy. (Mulki et al., 2015)	Mcfarland (2003), Mulki et al. (2015)	Coercive tactics and interpersonal conflict lead to felt stress. Occurs from psychological and emotional demands on salesperson time and energy. Learning orientation is a coping mechanism for felt stress.	Sales organizations and managers can help reduce felt stress by managing and training salespeople about conflict. Improved collaboration, decision-making, and conflict resolution reduce felt stress.
Negative Behavior Salesperson Deviance <i>Included in 17 Studies</i>	Refers to voluntary frontline behaviors that violate organizational norms and are opportunistically directed at the organization, its members, or external constituents. (Bande, Fernández-Ferrín, Varela, & Jaramillo, 2015; Darrat et al., 2010)	Darrat et al. (2010), Bande et al. (2015), Yoo and Frankwick (2013)	Job satisfaction, organizational job embeddedness, and social undermining influence salesperson deviance. Motivation moderates the effect of emotional exhaustion on deviant behavior.	To mitigate deviance, (1) utilize assertive communication of acceptable norms, (2) instill proper mentoring, (3) develop coordinated monitoring and control systems, and (4) set appropriate expectations.
Negative State Information overload <i>Included in 5 Studies</i>	Induced by a level of information exceeding the ability of an individual to assimilate or process during a given unit of time (Jacoby, Speller, & Kohn, 1974)	Hunter (2004)	Information overload has a negative influence on self-efficacy and sales performance	Sales managers need to ensure that implementing new technologies will not increase information overload
Negative Behavior Interpersonal Conflict <i>Included in 2 Studies</i>	A broad range of interpersonal mistreatment behaviors in the workplace, such as rude behavior, yelling, or other interpersonally deviant acts. See "conflict" and "inter-unit conflict." (Mulki et al., 2015; Sliter, Pui, Sliter, & Jex, 2011)	Mulki et al. (2015), Sliter et al. (2011), Jaramillo, Mulki, and Boles (2011).	Overload, ambiguity/stress positively influence interpersonal conflict. Interpersonal conflict leads to emotional exhaustion, subversive acts, and workplace aggression. Regulation of emotions reduces conflict.	Create a sales collegial culture. Motivated salespeople who meet unreasonable customer demands run the risk of interpersonal conflict with coworkers. Managers need to structure an ambitious yet not overwhelming workload for salespeople.
Negative Behavior Inter-Unit Conflict <i>Included in 1 Study</i>	Communication difficulties, lack of cooperation among departments, or overlapping responsibilities of employees. See "conflict" and "interpersonal conflict." (Lapidus, Roberts, & Chonko, 1996)	Lapidus et al. (1996)	Positively related to stress among salespeople. Influences the relationship between salespeople and sales managers negatively.	Flexibility in task and performance may help reduce inter-unit conflict.
Negative State Job Boreout <i>Included in 1 Study</i>	"a negative psychological state of low work-related arousal, manifested in three primary forms: a crisis of meaning at work, job boredom, and a crisis of growth at work" Stock (2015, p. 574)	Stock (2016).	Job boreout has a negative influence on customer oriented behavior.	Organizations need to reassess their work design to provide space for creativity and self-fulfillment to reduce boreout. Training programs that will help stimulate and influence customer oriented behavior
		Bouzari and Karatepe (2018)	Job insecurity among salespeople is due to interpretations of events,	Training programs that motivate salespeople to improve technical and

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Table 1 (continued)

Construct	Definition	Key Articles	Findings/Comments	Practical Implications/Tackling Negativity
Negative State Job Insecurity <i>Included in 2 Studies</i>	The subjective experience of being threatened by job loss (Schaufeli, 2016, p. 33)		people, and signals associated with work and social environments. It threatens their identity, personal resources and hope.	behavioral skills and increase opportunities for career advancement would reduce unfavourable perceptions of job insecurity. Hope helps to reduce insecurity hence, management should try to hire salespeople that are hopeful.
Negative State Job Stress <i>Included in 11 Studies</i>	Salesperson job stress is a salesperson’s perception that the work environment has taxed personal resources. See also stress and role stress. (Jelinek & Ahearne, 2006)	Jelinek and Ahearne (2006); Schwepker and Ingram (2016)	A mechanism where ethical climate leads to lower turnover intention and higher performance. Job stress leads to strain, withdrawal, anti-citizenship behavior, and burnout. Ethical leadership and CO moderate.	Sales management and sales control systems should be aligned to reduce job stress. Compensation should be competitive as well as cooperative to reduce job stress. Reducing role conflict reduces job stress.
Negative State Job Tension <i>Included in 2 Studies</i>	A measure of how often salespeople have experienced symptoms of job-related anxiety. (Singh, 1998)	Singh (1998)	Role stressors have an inverted U relationship with job tension. Job characteristics have a negative linear relationship with job tension.	Improved by reducing role conflict, ambiguity, and job tension. Increasing variety/participation and autonomy/feedback, is positive.
Negative State Moral Disengagement <i>Included in 1 Study</i>	Moral disengagement describes a cognitive state in which moral standards are deactivated.	Seriki, Nath, Ingene, and Evans (2020)	Positively related to salesperson’s customer-directed CWB and organization-directed CWB	Sales managers can serve as role models to help minimize the likelihood of moral disengagement toward customers and org.
Negative Behavior Opportunistic Behavior <i>Included in 2 Studies</i>	Opportunistic behavior refers to a network member’s immoral, self-interest-seeking behavior, including lying, stealing, cheating, and calculative efforts to mislead, distort, disguise, and even obfuscate (Williamson, 1985)	Kang, Ryu, and Lee (2019). Ramawami (2002).	The lack of information sharing and the existence of information controllers increases salesperson opportunistic behavior. It is influenced by salesperson position and relational centrality	Sales organizations needs to be cognizant of the position of salespeople and their social characteristics. Salespeople need to be trained to understand intrafirm network structure and each salesperson’s position in the network
Negative State Polychronic Attitude <i>Included in 2 Studies</i>	Degree to which individuals enjoy combining activities simultaneously and suggests that some people can more successfully combine activities into a limited time frame. (Hunter & Goebel, 2008)	Hunter and Goebel (2008)	Polychronic Attitude has a negative influence on salesperson information overload and a positive influence on salesperson need for cognition.	Managers need to reduce salesperson adverse effects due to information overload. Organizations need to streamline information dumping and train salespeople to scan and identify the crucial information required for decision-making.
Negative State Role Ambiguity <i>Included in 54 Studies</i>	A direct function of the discrepancy between the information available to a person and that which is required for adequate performance of his role. (Ambrose et al., 2014)	Ambrose et al. (2014), Boles et al. (2003), Onyemah (2008)	Influences job satisfaction and burnout. Inverted-U between ambiguity & performance. Occurs in seven areas: company, supervisor, customer, ethics, other managers, coworkers, and family.	Organizational structure and management style help salespeople to minimize role ambiguity. Firms should invest in training to help the salesforce reduce ambiguity. Clarity in policy changes help reduce ambiguity.
Negative State Role Conflict <i>Included in 50 Studies</i>	The degree of incompatibility associated with role expectations. (Ambrose et al., 2014)	Ambrose et al. (2014), Ackfeldt and Malhotra (2013), Lewin and Sager (2009)	Negative effect on affective commitment and positive effect on continuance commitment. Sales role conflict stems from issues (e.g., clients indicating satisfaction, but not buying), incongruent demands, or goals.	Intervention tools like empowerment and professional development help salespeople to reduce role conflict.
Negative State Role Overload <i>Included in 11 Studies</i>	The degree to which expectations exceed an individual’s abilities and motivations to perform tasks. See also “work overload.” (Ambrose et al., 2014)	Ambrose et al. (2014), Hunter and Goebel (2008)	Higher levels of role overload will lead to emotional exhaustion and burnout. Role overload has a positive influence on need for cognition, information overload and frustration.	Understanding of sales workplace situations helps managers to prevent role overload. Managers must recognize the factors that drive overload and develop strategies to alleviate them.
Negative State Role Stress <i>Included in 24 Studies</i>	Combination of role conflict when job expectations/demands are viewed as incompatible, and role ambiguity, which arises from uncertain job functions & responsibilities. See also stress and job stress. (Jaramillo et al., 2011)	Jaramillo et al. (2011), Ackfeldt and Malhotra (2013), Fournier et al. (2013)	Expansion of job responsibilities can increase role stress. Role stress exists when employees experience both role ambiguity and role conflict. Role stress influences affective and continuance commitment.	Management must provide a complete/realistic notion of job. Fit between the job/applicant is important. Should focus on helping proficiency of duties and time mgmt. Managers should use interventions to reduce role stress.
Negative State Sales Call Anxiety <i>Included in 3 Studies</i>	Negative expectations about an upcoming transaction that become exaggerated when small failures or setbacks characteristic of everyday situations occur. (Belschak et al., 2006)	Belschak et al. (2006), Verbeke and Bagozzi (2000)	Negative self-evaluations, negative customer evaluations, awareness of physiological symptoms, and protective actions. A function of negative affectivity and anxiety contextual cues.	Salespeople can develop coping tactics in order to deal with their SCA. The focus on coping strategies can be productive or counterproductive, depending on the nature and intensities of the SCA.
Negative State Salesperson Insecurity <i>Included in 2 Study</i>	Insecurity can be reflected in emotional reactivity that is represented by heightened fear, distress, vigilance, and covert hostility. (Raina & Bhan, 2013) Behavior of the salesperson initiated with the intent of increasing their	Chaker, Schumann, Zablah, and Flint (2016), Raina and Bhan (2013) Strutton, Pelton, and Tanner (1996)	Includes: sources of discomfort, experiential beliefs, cognitive interpretation, and affective response. Influences motivation, buyers and sales performance. Self-promotion behaviors are generally associated with lower levels	Organizations and sales managers can play a role in controlling and limiting the amount of insecurity. Focus on curtailing discomforts and helping salespeople cope with insecurity. Sales managers must train executives with appropriate self-promotion

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Table 1 (continued)

Construct	Definition	Key Articles	Findings/Comments	Practical Implications/Tackling Negativity
Negative Behavior Self-Promotion <i>Included in 1 Study</i>	attractiveness among customers with an intent to deceive or manipulate others.		and alienates customers during sales interactions	behavior, one that is not deceptive and misleading. They must discourage self-promotion behaviors that will likely turn customers away.
Negative State Stress <i>Included in 4 Studies</i>	An individual experiences stress when they perceive that a situation presents a demand which threatens to exceed their capabilities and resources for dealing with the situation. See also job stress and role stress. (Tarafdar et al., 2014)	Tarafdar et al. (2014), Holmlund-Rytkönen and Strandvik (2005),	The buyer–seller relationship is replete with stress. Stress in relationships is highly risky and affects relationship strength. Co-existence of alternative patterns of stress leads to frustration.	Measuring relationship stress level aids in detecting problems. Organizational flexibility with regard to performance demands reduces stress experienced by salespeople. Open communication reduces manager-salesperson gaps and stress.
Negative State Supervisor Undermining <i>Included in 1 Study</i>	Supervisor offenses that destroy a salesperson’s reputation, her ability to accomplish sales work, or ability to maintain positive relationships. (Yoo & Frankwick, 2013)	Yoo and Frankwick (2013)	Supervisor undermining positively affects salesperson emotional exhaustion.	Boundary spanning SPs interact with a variety of potential sources that may exhibit undermining behaviors toward them, so salespeople may experience more stress.
Negative State Technostress <i>Included in 1 Study</i>	Stress that users experience when working with technology on a daily basis or the conditions that they are unable to adequately respond to. (Tarafdar et al., 2014)	Tarafdar et al. (2014)	Technostress drivers are positively related to role stress and negatively related to technology-enabled innovation.	Responsibilities in the sales role associated with technostress and reduced performance. Help desk offsets technostress. Managers need to ensure salespeople use technology appropriate for their specific needs.
Negative Behavior Turnover Intentions/ Intention to leave <i>Included in 72 Studies</i>	The salesperson behavioral intentions to leave the organization. (Jackofsky, 1984)	Bande et al. (2015), Darrat, Atinc, and Babin (2016), Hartmann and Rutherford (2015)	Psychological contract breach positively influences turnover intentions via commitment and job satisfaction. Role ambiguity and emotional exhaustion are positively related to turnover intention. Salesperson – leader exchange negative to turnover.	Enhancing salesperson’s perceptions of the organization structure, processes, and events will reduce TOI. Firms need to provide salespeople with authority to respond to unique buyer needs, competencies, and opportunities. Training to help salespeople understand the value they create and importance to customers.
Negative Behavior Unreceptive Behavior <i>Included in 1 Study</i>	Refers to an instigation stage, when a salesperson attempts to approach a customer who refuses assistance or help during purchase of a product/ service.	Alhouti, Butler, Johnson, and Davis (2014)	Increases the tendency of salespeople to avoid customers. Salesperson CO and emotional intelligence helps them deal with such unwanted pursuit behavior.	Training salespeople to become aware of their UPB and how to refrain from engaging in such behavior. Organizations should hire salespeople high in emotional intelligence, as they are more aware on handling UPB.
Negative State and/or Behavior Withdrawal <i>Included in 2 Studies</i>	Avoidance of responsibility. This can be behavioral and/or cognitive. (Sager, Strutton, & Johnson, 2006)	Sager, Yi, and Futrell (1998, 2006)	Salesperson’s perceptions of equity, fairness, and satisfaction negatively influence withdrawal. Attachment to the environment relates inversely to withdrawal.	The behaviors sales managers enact influence salespeople’s attitude and attachment to the selling environment and affect withdrawal.
Negative State Work-Family Conflict <i>Included in 19 Studies</i>	A form of inter-role conflict where demands created by the job interfere with fulfilling family-related responsibilities. (Bande et al., 2015)	Bande et al. (2015), Darrat et al. (2010)	Work family conflict (WFC) positively influences job stress, turnover intentions, emotional exhaustion, and deviance (interpersonal, organizational and customer directed).	Organizations can create family-friendly policies, autonomy, and access to childcare, and flextime, which can reduce WFC. Training can help to develop salesperson self-efficacy to control WFC.
Negative State Workplace Isolation <i>Included in 4 Studies</i>	An individual’s perception of isolation from others at work. (Marshall, Michaels, & Mulki, 2007).	Marshall et al. (2007)	Workplace Isolation negatively affects trust in supervisors and coworkers.	Increased organizational support that creates feelings of mutual obligation and support. Feeling supported makes salespeople feel less isolated and less vulnerable.
Negative State Work Overload <i>Included in 2 Studies</i>	Employee’s perception of excessive job demands in terms of high workload. Work overload has a detrimental effect on attitudes and behaviors. See “role overload.” (Jaramillo et al., 2011)	Jaramillo et al. (2011), Mulki, Laskk, and Jaramillo (2008)	Self-efficacy is negatively related to work overload. Role ambiguity conflict, and stress are positively related to work overload.	Organizational culture that fosters collaboration and productive work outcomes. Sales managers need to structure ambitious, yet not overwhelming workloads. It is important for salespeople to have clear unambiguous directions.
Negative State Failure <i>Included in 11 studies</i>	Sales failure reflects a salesperson bidding for a sale s/he did not get or being unsuccessful at capturing commitment from a prospect (Mayo & Mallin, 2010)	Mayo and Mallin (2010); Dubinsky (1999).	Failure leads to persistent and irrational anxiety leading to self-esteem and motivation. Failure has direct influence on sales performance	Sales managers can monitor environments and attributions to reduce failure incidences as well as assist in failure avoidance orientations. Salespeople can also proactively take control over when failure occurs in the sales.
Negative State Time Pressure <i>Included in 1 studies</i>	Time Pressure is a type of psychological stress that occurs when an individual has less time available (real or perceived) than is necessary to complete a task or obtain a result.	Rostami, Gabler, and Agnihotri (2019)	Pressure influences behaviors such as unethical, creative and effort behavior	Time management is a promising skill to help salespeople manage this inherent aspect of time pressure
Negative State Innovation	Innovation resistance is a state/ attitude defined as the degree to	Cho and Chang (2008).	Innovativeness, self-efficacy, group efficacy, peer usage, job satisfaction	Sales organizations can lower this resistance by making sure that the

(continued on next page)

Table 1 (continued)

Construct	Definition	Key Articles	Findings/Comments	Practical Implications/Tackling Negativity
Resistance <i>Included in 1 studies</i>	which salespeople feel threatened by change.		and perceived performance are antecedents of Innovation resistance	inhibitors of resistance are promoted. Sales managers can make more widely available user training programs when it comes to change
Negative State Guilt <i>Included in 5 studies</i>	Guilt is a self-conscious state characterized by a painful appraisal of having done (or thought) something that is wrong.	Agnihotri, Rapp, Kothandaraman, and Singh (2012) , Gabler, Agnihotri, and Itani (2017)	Guilt is associated with relationship performance, ethical attitudes, helping behaviours and would impact performance.	Sales managers and organizations should implement training that helps salespeople transition away from guilt. Managers inputs and open communication, feedback and coaching would play and important role in helping to reduce guilt

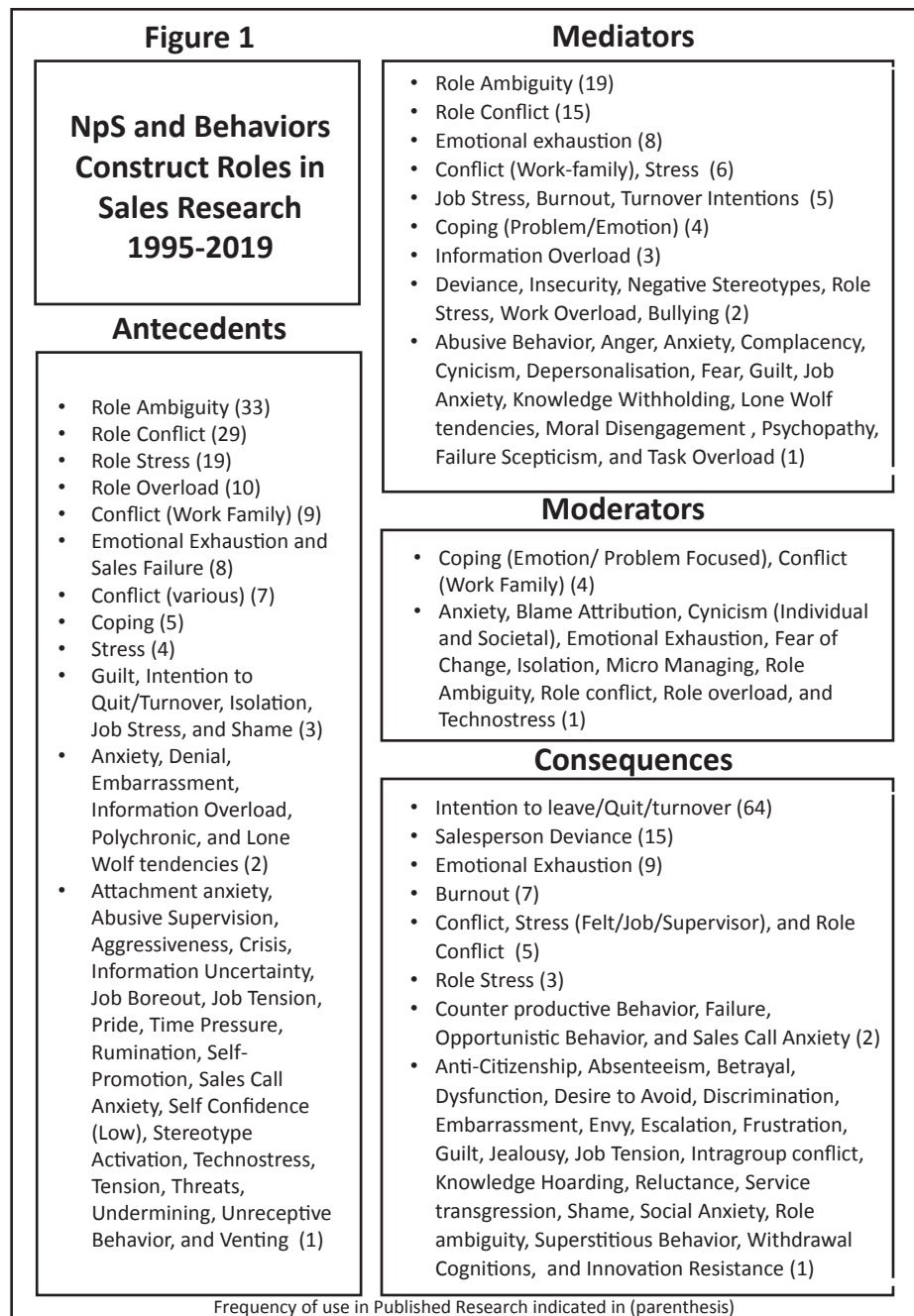


Fig. 1. NpS and Behaviors Construct Roles in Sales Research.

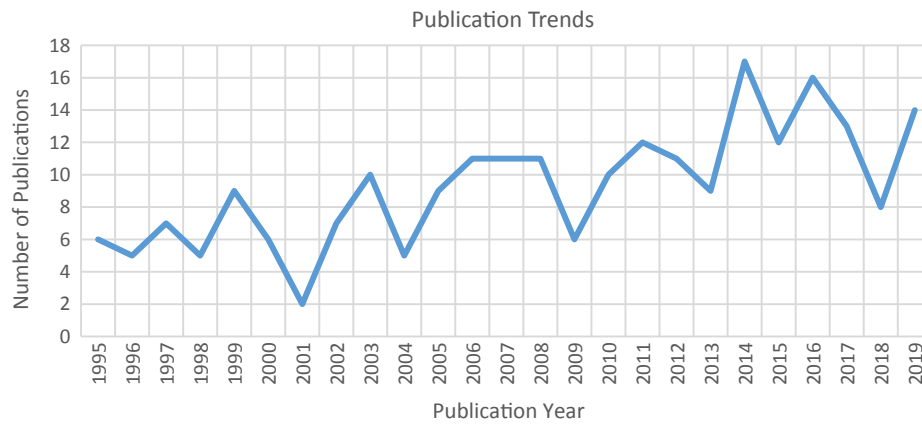


Fig. 2. Publication Trends.

4.1. Negative psychological states and behaviors in sales

NpS and behaviors are categorized as either antecedents, mediators, moderators and outcomes derived from the literature. In Fig. 1, each NpS and behavior construct is ranked on the number of times it appears in our data for each role. We do reiterate that a construct can appear more than once in Fig. 1, for example, role conflict has been studied as an antecedent, mediator, moderator, and as an outcome variable in prior research. Moreover, we represent the number of times each construct has been studied in the past, thereby enhancing understanding of construct importance as well as providing guidance on areas in need of future research that are under researched with regard to NpS and behaviors. The following sections outline the various ways that NpS and behaviors have been studied across our set of sales research.

4.1.1. NpS and behaviors as antecedent-based factors

The first category includes those NpS and behaviors that explicitly influence other states and behaviors as well as sales performance either directly or indirectly. Our coding process revealed that the most common NpS and behavior constructs are: Role Ambiguity (33), Role Conflict (29), Role Stress (19), Role Overload (10), Conflict (Work Family) (9), Sales Failure (8), Emotional Exhaustion (8) and Conflict (Intra-group/Manifest/Task) (7). These constructs all represent antecedents that have a negative influence on desired sales outcomes, as well as sales performance. Our findings indicate that role ambiguity is the most studied antecedent of NpS, which aligns with Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal (2011) that find it is a top negative driver of performance.

Role ambiguity represents a good illustration of NpS, which we use to provide an overview of NpS as an antecedent condition in sales. Role ambiguity occurs when salespeople perceive insufficient information to perform their job effectively and/or when they are uncertain about the expectations of role partners (Ambrose et al., 2014). We suggest that role ambiguity is a highly studied construct because today's complex sales roles require higher customer and role expectations that make the path to task performance less clear. The remaining groups of antecedent conditions offer areas that are less researched, as such, they offer areas for potential future research as new NpS and behaviors evolve and become prominent in sales environments.

4.1.2. NpS and behaviors as mediator and moderator-based factors

Negative mediators and moderators are mostly studied in sales literature regarding how they can influence relationships that have both positive and negative outcomes. Based on our review, we identified thirty-three ($n = 31$) NpS and behaviors modeled as mediators and thirteen ($n = 13$) NpS and behaviors presented as moderators. For example, the most common mediators are Role Ambiguity (19), Role Conflict (15) and Emotional exhaustion (8) and the most utilized

moderators are Coping (4, Emotion/Problem Focused) and Conflict (4, Work Family). Studies that investigate moderators of NpS and behaviors are limited. This finding suggests that future researchers should focus on moderators of NpS and behaviors, rather than just antecedents and outcomes, which have been researched much more extensively. Identifying moderating mechanisms that are negative in nature would enhance the level of understanding of NpS and behaviors. In addition, NpS and behaviors used as mediators have been more widely studied than moderators, however most have been examined only once or twice in prior research. Therefore, future researchers should also look at the importance of NpS and behaviors as moderating and mediating mechanisms to improve knowledge generation in this area.

4.1.3. NpS and behaviors as outcome-based factors

The last category in Fig. 1 focused on NpS and behaviors as outcome variables that are studied as a direct or indirect effect of other factors. Thirty-five ($n = 35$) NpS and behaviors have been examined as outcome variables in extant literature. The most critical NpS and behaviors outcome variables are; Intention to leave/quit/turnover (64), Salesperson Deviance (15), Emotional Exhaustion (9), Burnout (7), Conflict (5), Stress (Felt/Job/Supervisor) (5), Role conflict (5). These negative outcome factors can arise from either organizational, supervisor, individual or customer-based factors or other NpS and behaviors. We observed here that the most critical negative outcome is salesperson intention to leave/quit/turnover. The topic of salesperson turnover intention is more than two decades old (e.g., Futrell & Parasuraman, 1984), however this NpS remains a critical outcome as turnover rates are high in many industries, with estimates ranging as high as 27% (Darnon, 2008). This can be explained by the fact that even after decades of research, the ability of sales organization to address turnover remains limited. Similarly, research conducted by Sunder, Kumar, Goreczny, and Maurer (2017), highlights the criticality of salesperson turnover intention. In summary, there is a need to redevelop existing knowledge on NpS and behavior outcomes such as turnover intention to identify effective ways to reduce them. Future researchers can focus their efforts on both micro- and macro-level interventions to reduce NpS and behavioral outcomes within the sales domain.

4.2. Publication year, paper type and methods employed

Early research on negativity in sales considers job stress, salesperson coping strategies, impact of negativity on information processing, and a causal model to evaluate supervision, role stress, commitment and internal service quality (Babin, Boles, & Darden, 1995; Boshoff & Mels, 1995; Sager & Wilson, 1995; Strutton et al., 1995). Subsequently, there has been an increasing number of published articles on NpS and behaviors in sales, with the highest number of articles (17) published in

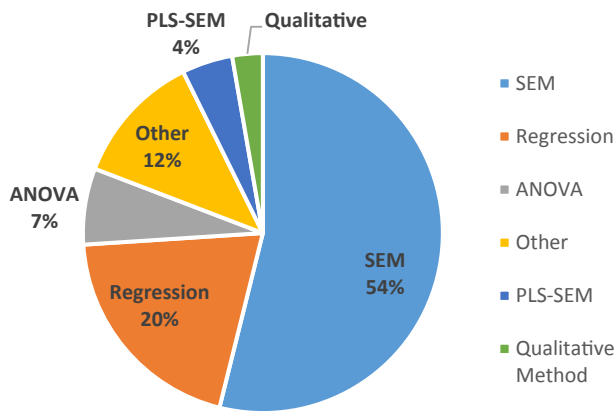


Fig. 3. Method Approach of NpS and Behaviors Studies.

2014 and (16) in 2016 (see Fig. 2). Topics concerning negativity and salespeople have been studied for almost 25 years and the stream continues to grow. In particular, the results demonstrate an upward trajectory in the scholarly output on NpS and behaviors in sales with over 34% of articles published in the last 5 years (i.e. 2014–2019). Our results show that research on this topic is not yet saturated, as new units of analysis, contexts, geographical locations, and methodologies continue to emerge in the area.

Of the 232 articles, thirteen are conceptual/theoretical articles and the rest are empirical. The low number of conceptual/theoretical articles is notable, as these studies are paramount to developing a solid theoretical foundation and expanding the theoretical boundaries of any research stream (Vrontis & Christofi, 2019). Theoretical papers establish the foundation for theory development in a discipline and contribute more to the advancement of a topical area than empirical papers. Further investigation into the 219 empirical articles showed that; 89.2% used the field survey method of data collection. 3.1% used qualitative methods, 0.9% used the field experiment technique and 1.4% used the laboratory experiments. 5.4% used secondary data or did not mention the method of data collection used in the study. A detailed account of the methods used in research studies helps to build understanding and trust in research and also simplifies the work needed for future replication studies.

Various methods of analysis were used to study NpS and behaviors. As seen in Fig. 3, 54% of the articles used covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM). 20% used regression analysis (e.g. multiple regression, hierarchical regression, OLS regression). Other methods of data analysis such as discriminant analysis, MANCOVA, ANOVA, factor analysis, and qualitative methods were used in 21% of the studies. Partial least squares SEM (PLS-SEM) comprised 8% of the articles. However, 70% of the articles that used PLS were published between 2015 and 2019, indicating a rise in the adoption of PLS-SEM in recent research.

Extant research on negativity in sales overwhelmingly relies on surveys for data collection and SEM for data analysis. Future research should consider using additional methods of data collection and analysis. For instance, less than 5% of the studies in our consideration set use longitudinal study designs. In addition, there are very few experimental studies that investigate NpS and behaviors in sales. Experiments and longitudinal studies could be very useful in understanding the causal relationships between negative states, behaviors and salesperson performance and wellbeing. Therefore, research that explains the causal relationships between NpS and behaviors is encouraged to help develop clear ways that managers can take action to offset the adverse effects of these states and behaviors within their salesforce.

4.3. Journal outlets and fields of research

The *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management* (JPSSM) has published the most articles on NpS and behaviors. JPSSM published 32.7% of all articles within our consideration set, more than double the second highest outlet. The *Journal of Business Research* (13.3%) published a significant number of articles on the subject as well and occupies the second spot on the list. Industrial marketing journals such as the *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing* (10.3%) and *Industrial Marketing Management* (10.3%) were also among the most common outlets for research on negativity in sales. Premier marketing journals had some coverage of NpS topics, including the *Journal of Marketing* (2.1%), *Journal of Marketing Research* (1.7%), *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* (5.1%), and *Journal of Retailing* (0.4%). Fig. 4 shows the number of articles published in various outlets. Considering the changing sales environment, increasing use of technology and increasing pressures on salespeople to perform, understanding negative states and behaviors in

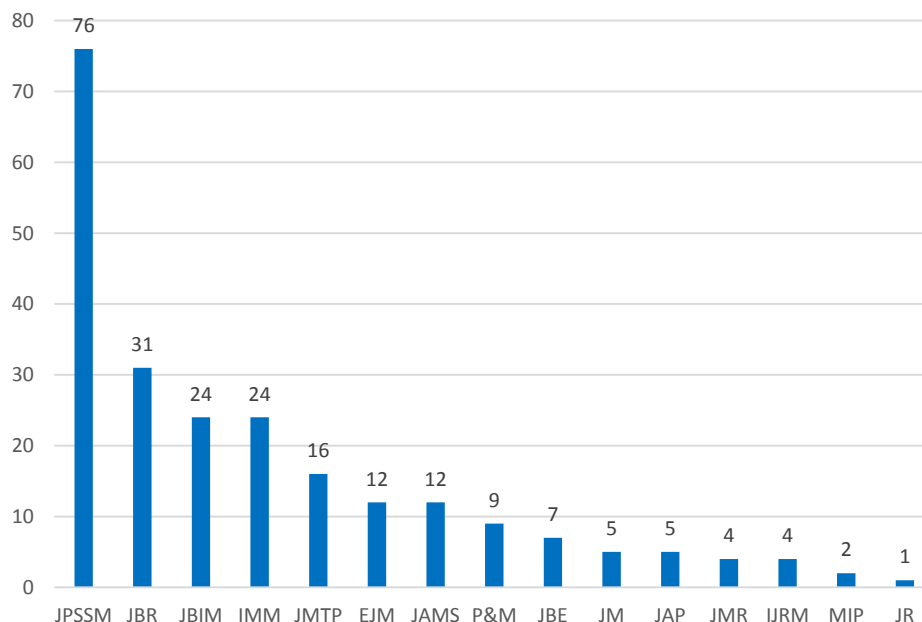


Fig. 4. NpS and Behaviors Research by Journal.

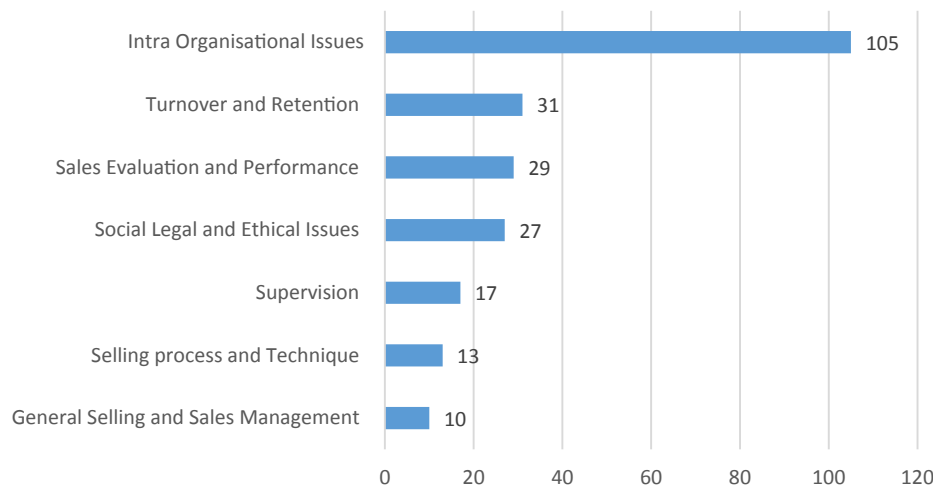


Fig. 5. NpS and Behaviors Research Key Topics.

sales is highly salient. Marketing journals should encourage high-quality research that utilizes new forms of data to develop its findings.

4.4. Geographic analysis of research stream

Of the journals in our consideration set, only two were non-American journals, the *International Journal of Research in Marketing* and the *European Journal of Marketing*. This finding helps to explain why 56% of the empirical articles only used American samples. In addition, 19.4% of published articles failed to mention the nationality of the study respondents. Knowledge of the nationality of sample participants could help to identify boundaries of research findings and how they apply to salespeople in one culture versus another. For those that reported a non-US sample, Asian samples made up 11% of studies, and 40% of these Asian studies specifically mention India as the sample origin. Considering the global nature of today’s business climate and the rise of emerging markets, there is an opportunity for research in these markets.

5. Thematic analysis of the literature

5.1. Study context and unit of analysis

The articles of our SLR cover a wide variety of topics. For example, some articles were interested in turnover and retention, while others focus on compensation. Fig. 5 highlights the most investigated topics. Intra-organizational issues were investigated far more than any other topic. This stands to reason considering role theory is the foundation for most of the studies under our purview. Role theory posits that role stress is comprised of role ambiguity, conflict, clarity, and in some cases role overload (Singh & Saatcioglu, 2008; see Table 1). When organizational roles are not clearly defined, conflict exists and sales performance suffers.

The unit of analysis for 81.4% of our articles in our set is the salesperson. Clearly, NpS research focuses on the salesperson; however, salespeople do not operate within a vacuum. Several factors such as sales managers, buyers and the firm as a whole affect salespeople. Salespeople should be studied in the context of these factors. However, only 4.3% of the articles collected dyadic data on salespeople and their sales managers, while 3% of articles collected data from multiple sources (for example, students, salespeople, buyers, and/or managers). 2.2% collected data from sales managers and 0.9% collected data from buyers. Future research should expand its focus to include more dyadic, boundary spanning relationships (e.g., salespeople and managers, support, and buyers). Multiple units of analysis will help to develop knowledge of how NpS affects not only salespeople, but also other

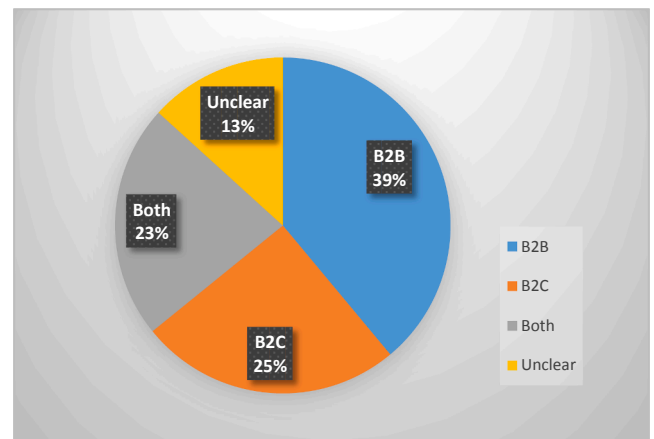


Fig. 6. NpS and Behaviors Research Customer Type.

stakeholders. More antecedents and outcomes of negativity in sales may arise as studies investigate contexts beyond that of the salesperson. This broadened scope will increase our knowledge of the topic and assist sales managers and firms to better understand how to deal with NpS and behaviors in their salesforce.

Most studies investigated business-to-business (B2B) topics. Specifically, 38.9% of the articles studied pure B2B settings, 25.2% studied business-to-consumer (B2C), and 22.6% studied both B2B and B2C (see Fig. 6). The focus on business markets is expected considering the stakes are higher in B2B sales and it is the most common focus of sales research. Higher stakes imply more room for NpS such as role stress, role ambiguity, and anxiety. In B2B settings, it is more likely that negative behaviors, such as deviance and supervisor undermining occur. Technology is also increasingly used in B2B sales, which can lead to technostress (see Table 1). Some of the journals that publish articles in this area are dedicated to industrial markets and this can be a possible explanation for the prevalence of B2B research in our review.

Both goods and service sales were represented in our sample. 25.3% of the articles studied salespeople selling goods and 24% studied salespeople who deal in services. Most of the articles (41.3%) studied a combination of goods and service salespeople (see Fig. 7). Studying different products/solutions clarifies what differences, if any, exist in negativity between service and goods salespeople. Recently, there has been a push to ignore the distinction between goods and services in marketing research to focus on more holistic, service-based solutions (i.e., service dominant logic). Our results support this approach, as no

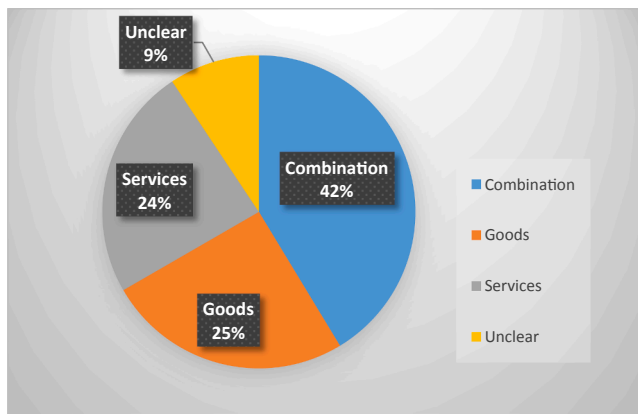


Fig. 7. NpS and Behaviors Research Product Offering.

observable differences exist within the extant research on goods versus service selling and NpS and behaviors. Similar states and behaviors are found in both groups and the effects on performance are also similar. However, a meta-analysis to confirm this finding empirically is suggested as a future research topic.

6. Future research overview

The purpose of our SLR is to provide insight into a maturing research domain and directions for future research. To this end, our results include both a summary of the past and a look toward the future. Given the “backward review to inform future opportunity” perspective of the present manuscript, each of the following sections attempts to draw its own unique conclusions to develop future research ideas. However, to formally conclude our investigation of NpS and behaviors, in this section we summarize several key themes found within our review and offer suggestions for research directions in each topical area.

6.1. Prominent and burgeoning topics

We formally begin our future research discussion by outlining arguments for continued research in two important areas. First, we look at *role stress*, the most studied topic within our analysis, to suggest that more advanced investigation is needed. Then, we look to a new topic, *technostress*, to suggest a burgeoning area in need of conceptual and empirical investigation.

6.1.1. Role stress

Inter-organizational issues and sales performance are the two topics most covered in extant literature. Specifically, the most investigated relationship was the effect of *role stress* (e.g., derived from role ambiguity and role conflict) on job performance. Most authors found a positive linear relationship between stressors and turnover and a negative linear relationship with satisfaction and performance. However, Onyemah (2008) investigated the relationship between role stressors and performance using a longitudinal study design and found an inverted-U relationship. This implies that some stress positively influences performance, but a limited or excessive amount decreases performance. The extant research relies heavily on field surveys and very few longitudinal studies. Thus, considering the scholarly interest in sales performance and role stress, it is important to develop a clearer understanding of the concepts. Longitudinal research would uncover many new insights, such as the nature of role stress over time. For instance, interesting questions include “what is the inflection point of NpS?” and “what new moderators and mediators of a connected workplace affect role stress and sales performance?” We suggest that in a connected sales environment, different stresses can spillover (e.g., workplace, technological, and personal) to affect salespeople across settings in different ways and at

different times.

6.1.2. Technostress

Technostress appears as both an antecedent and moderator in our review (e.g., Tarafdar et al., 2014). Technostress is the stress that users experience when constantly working with technology and the taxing conditions it creates for users (Tarafdar et al., 2014). We suggest that technostress is an understudied area with room for many contributions. Further investigation will help to answer questions regarding how the sheer volume of sales enablement tools is affecting salesperson well-being and performance. For example, Lynch (2018) writing in Forbes provides a “prescription” for effective implementation of sales enablement in sales organizations. We suggest that testing models derived from industry practices that develop new theory on technostress will add a contribution to the literature. Thus, sales researchers should investigate how technostress plays a role in enablement implementations – with a focus on how it is either mitigated or leveraged to improve results. At a broader level, we suggest research on if the positive effects of technology (i.e., CRM, enablement tools, artificial intelligence, and 24/7 mobile connectivity) outweigh the resulting technostress and overload that may arise as a result. Under what conditions are salespeople most likely to suffer from technostress? Do factors like personality and age have an impact on technostress? Exploring questions such as these will advance the sales literature on NpS and behaviors as social selling practices evolve.

6.2. Boundaries of NpS and behaviors

Moving forward, sales researchers should identify new antecedents, moderators, mediators, and consequences not currently studied in the literature. The cross-organizational nature of sales environments renders the sales profession a distinct environment to work in (Rangarajan, Chonko, Jones, & Roberts, 2004). Thus, a review of the non-sales NpS and behaviors literature could offer insight into unexplored boundaries of this domain. These new areas offer important moderators, such as disengagement, manager support, sales support, new job demands (e.g., technostress), team (in) cohesion, emotions, coaching, and role modeling. Of these, technostress (previously identified) and emotions seem most salient due to technology and connectivity overload. For example, a more granular approach to studying emotions in sales, such as a deeper exploration of jealousy and envy, would guide future understanding of “how” NpS works at an individual level to drive relational and social comparison stress. Topics like jealousy and envy have been largely overlooked in the sales NpS literature (see Bagozzi, 2006), but warrant investigation, as they are factors that may easily appear within a sales setting. At a slightly higher level, we suggest that more research is needed on salesperson emotional regulation. Emotional intelligence (Kidwell, Hardesty, Murtha, & Sheng, 2011) is important for salespeople who deal with stress across boundaries and situations. As frontline boundary-spanners, salespeople need emotional intelligence to understand and interpret customer needs. For example, an individual with high emotional intelligence may be less inclined to retaliate or engage in workplace deviance.

Our study focuses on the negative, but positive effects also exist. The positive psychology literature (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) has become increasingly significant in sales research and offers potential variables that influence NpS. Practices such as mindfulness, gratitude, meditation, exercise, yoga, visualization, and personal life coaching are increasingly studied in the literature as they are adopted by organizations to promote better employee health and well-being. Of interest, only two studies in our review (Hochstein, Bonney, & Clark, 2015; Lyngdoh, Liu, & Sridhar, 2018) focused specifically on positive aspects of typically negative behaviors. Future research should investigate this area further, by researching questions such as if mindfulness reduces the impact of stress, or if positive practices improve salesperson coping.

Finally, future research may include the following issues specifically

related to sales topics: sales enablement (previously mentioned), social selling, social sales management, and knowledge brokering. At a high level, future research should investigate how NpS is impacted as the “easy work” salespeople are currently tasked with is diminishing (i.e., coping is facilitated through performance of less cognitive sales tasks, which are being automated at an accelerating rate) and an increased level of performance-orientated tasks and sales activities are expected by managers and customers. Social selling is also an increasingly important aspect of a sales role (Rodriguez, Peterson, & Krishnan, 2012). As selling becomes more dependent on social media, research should investigate if transparency of relationships leads to increased levels of emotional response that drive NpS and behaviors. Social sales management involves the use of social CRM platforms to communicate and motivate sales teams. Inherently, the practice of using group comparisons and frequent ranking is expected to result in increased NpS and behaviors.

Finally, the knowledge broker role of salespeople has been the subject of several recent studies (e.g., Rapp, Bachrach, Panagopoulos, & Ogilvie, 2014; Verbeke et al., 2011). The knowledge broker role requires an almost unattainable level of domain expertise and insight. As salespeople are increasingly expected to broker voluminous amounts of understanding regarding the esoteric matters that underlie their eventually closed sales. Researchers should investigate the role and what outcomes can be expected when salespeople fail (e.g., misrepresentation of facts/information - customer-facing deviance). Study of these emerging topics will provide solid guidance on the boundaries of NpS and behaviors.

6.3. Theory

An overarching theory of NpS in sales is needed. The extant theories found in our study are largely borrowed from other disciplines (e.g., psychology and sociology). While these theories are useful, most do not account for the unique nature of sales environments. Sales research must focus on the pressures and behaviors experienced in boundary-spanning roles, which affect application of theory. The call for more theory development in marketing has been resounding among scholars for years, and sales research should be the vanguard to answer the call. While role theory is the basis of most of the studies within our consideration set, we suggest that conceptual research should go deeper to develop a theory of NpS in sales. A quality investigation of theoretical bases, and a deep look into the mechanisms of NpS and behaviors would help in the development of a theory that addresses the specific challenges of an increasingly stressful and demanding sales workplace and how managers should deal with it.

6.4. Methodology

Many methodologies exist for data collection and analysis in sales research. However, the NpS and behaviors literature, despite its growth, tends to employ simple regression or SEM methodologies, as evidenced in the results of our SLR. For example, a large percentage of the papers are empirical papers, but conceptual research is very important to establish the foundation for a new topical area. We suggest that future researchers should adopt a conceptual approach to studying NpS and behaviors in sales. As previously described, NpS and behaviors research relies heavily on American participant samples. Future research should include samples from other cultures to investigate how observed relationships change in these settings. For example, in cultures with high power distance, supervisor undermining may not have a negative effect on performance as salespeople see themselves as subordinates to their sales managers.

In addition, most of the empirical work utilized cross-sectional data. This approach is a good beginning, but we suggest that experiments, longitudinal approaches, secondary data, and new measurement techniques be used to guide future research. Almost all future research sections of the papers we reviewed called for longitudinal study of the topic, yet this approach is lacking in the literature, with most of the

Table 2

Future research directions proposed by extant literature.

Citation	Avenues for future research
Weeks and Fournier (2010)	Investigate time congruity in relation to other temporal dimensions as well as a focus on punctuality, and the pace of work.
Yoo and Frankwick (2013).	Examine the role of cognitive structures on the relationship between social undermining and deviant behaviors might offer new insight
Tarafdar et al. (2014)	Investigate task-technology fit as a potential antecedent of technostress, and identify adaptation mechanisms for the salesperson
Valentine et al. (2015).	Explore what context could be used to identify potential bullies and what attitudes and preferred behaviors are typical gateway characteristics that lead to bullying?
Stock (2016).	Examine how boreout affects customer-oriented behaviors during various phases of the customer relationship, such as acquisition, maintenance, or recovery.
Seriki, Evans, Jeon, Dant, and Helm (2016)	Explore additional efforts in examining/enhancing the measure of organizational cynicism. Examine whether organizational cynicism would affect highly motivated employees even when they perceive the marketing messages negatively?
Chaker et al. (2016)	Expound on the different dimensions of the state of salesperson insecurity and explore the strategies that salespeople employ to move away from a state of insecurity
Agnihotri et al. (2016).	Investigate how an salespeople in collectivist cultures cope differently with attachment anxiety as compared to those in individualistic society and how power distance or masculinity impacts attachment anxiety
Anaza and Nowlin (2017)	Identify the individual effect of recognition and financial rewards on knowledge withholding and hoarding. Examine if recognition and financial rewards (or their lack) could have differential effects on withholding and hoarding.
Micevski et al. (2017)	Examine the relative importance of the style in which a decision is implemented compared to the objective quality of decisions
Friend and Johnson (2017)	Investigate what is needed to win-back customers lost due to supplier complacency and the most effective ways to win back customers lost due to perceived service and/or sales complacency.
Hochstein et al. (2017)	Explore whether specific types of long-term consequences particularly draw salespeople to commit CWBs, and whether managers could implement means of discouraging CWBs
Kang et al. (2019)	Explore how a salesperson's central position in business-to-business or business-to-consumer relationships affects opportunistic behavior.
Micevski, Dewsnap, Cadogan, Kadic-Maglajlic, and Boso (2019)	Explore how salesperson intra-functional flexibility (SIF) as a resource can help them resolve negative conflicts.
Delpechitre, Black, and Farrish (2019).	Future research should examine the impact of technology overload on other members of the salesperson's network, including customers, intermediaries and other members of the organization.

research using SEM. SEM is an appropriate tool for confirming theory (CB-SEM) and testing theory (PLS-SEM). However, in line with our earlier call for new methodologies, we suggest that future research should adopt other methods such as ANOVA, multi-level modeling, qualitative, and logistic models of data analysis to broaden the usefulness of findings. Finally, as the domain matures, the topic of endogeneity should be addressed, perhaps through use of methodological approaches and new data sources, such as secondary data that represents real decisions and consequences of investigated topics.

7. Conclusion

Our study of NpS and behaviors is intended to provide a “rally point” for NpS and behaviors research within the sales domain. We suggest that the body of literature included in our analysis indicates a solid foundation for a broad topic. However, we also suggest that sales researchers should seriously consider how this topical area can be advanced to address new and future pressures and demands that are unique to sales settings. Given the 25-year scope of our research, we were surprised to find only 232 articles that addressed NpS and behaviors. This somewhat limited body of research offers many opportunities for additional research, capable of making a significant impact with scholars and managers. For instance, it is difficult to avoid exposure to stories of problems related to how salespeople conduct their business with customers in a negative fashion. During our synthesis of the literature, we identified several research gaps noted in prior literature that have never been addressed, which we suggest offer relevant starting points (in addition to our specific recommendation in the previous section) for continued research (see Table 2). Thus, we encourage more research on the topic of NpS and behaviors.

The present study offers five key contributions to scholars and managers. First, we codified 232 articles to derive a comprehensive and descriptive list of constructs related to NpS and behaviors (Table 1). We expect that scholars and managers alike will use this reference guide to embark upon their exploration of this broad topic. Second, we identify NpS and behaviors construct roles in prior research to help delineate how and where each construct should be considered for future research. We suggest that these contributions will help spur interest in continued research within the domain. Third, we suggest the need for development of an overarching theoretical basis of NpS and behaviors in sales. Fourth, we investigated the impact of NpS and behaviors to conclude that many outlets are open to publishing research on the topic and that many provide a substantial platform to disseminate results. Finally, our manuscript is replete with opportunities for future research, and concludes with a formal outline of several promising, current areas ripe for scholarly research. Overall, our study contributes to an area of timely and relevant intrigue to those interested in business topics.

As with all research, we recognize that our study of NpS has limitations. The scope of our research is limited by the body of prior research that describes the NpS and behaviors domain in a sales setting. This focus could have been expanded beyond sales, but we determined that investigating literature beyond the scope of sales would have the potential to confuse, rather than clarify. We specifically avoided these areas in an effort to more thoroughly delve into how NpS and behaviors operate within the context of the sales profession, yet do realize that research in other domains can inform sales research and should be considered in future research. Finally, our study focuses on articles published in a select set of journals and across a wide time frame, thus some research may be absent from our findings, yet our comprehensive set represents the vast majority of sales-related research published in the past 25 years on the NpS and behaviors topic.

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