

# SALES ENABLEMENT AND HINDRANCE STRESSORS' EFFECTS ON BURNOUT, TURNOVER INTENTIONS, AND SALES PERFORMANCE

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*Salesforce retention remains a challenge to keeping the “best and brightest” talent. To reduce salesperson attrition, some companies are investing in sales enablement initiatives. Based on perceptions of 302 B2B sales professionals, this study tests the direct effects of sales enablement on hindrance stressors, burnout, performance, and turnover intentions. The results show that sales enablement has a direct, negative impact on hindrance stressors, burnout, and turnover intentions, while directly increasing sales producer performance. One significant finding is that burnout partially mediates the relationship between sales enablement and turnover intentions, but not sales performance. The results further show that hindrance stressors partially mediate the path between sales enablement and burnout, but do not directly influence turnover intentions or performance directly. When firms do not enable their salespeople and minimize excessive hindrance-related stress, there is a significant chance that the salespeople will quit or underperform. Managerial implications are discussed, along with future research endeavors.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Today's sales leaders face volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments which create significant challenges (Dinana 2019). They oversee the execution of the sales strategy and manage day-to-day activities, such as recruiting and hiring, training and coaching, equipping, and assessing the performance of the salesforce (Jordan and Vazzana 2012). Unfortunately, many sales leaders, promoted from sales producers to management, find themselves ill-equipped (Wilkinson 2008). They are caught between placating customers and internal stakeholders, while also trying to strategically and tactically lead the sales unit (Ingram et al. 2005). Evidence suggests that salespeople burn out from pressure to make the numbers, a lack of training, and rejection (Comaford 2016), leading to lower job satisfaction and higher turnover (Chen et al. 2011; Shepherd, Tashchian, and Ridnour 2011). On average, companies lose approximately 30% of their sales talent pool annually to voluntary and involuntary turnover (The Bridge Group 2017), and the current job-hopping culture remains prevalent across all industries and age groups (Millennial, Gen-X, and Baby Boomer) (Bolsu 2017). Hence, sales leaders

face a constant battle to retain qualified sales talent.

Sales leaders are ultimately responsible for generating revenue growth to achieve performance metrics and face challenges to improve coordination, alignment, and integration of efforts between sales and marketing as they create an enabling sales culture. The direct impact of such an initiative would increase sales revenues and overall firm profitability (Kotler, Rackham, and Krishnaswamy 2006). However, that is not the case for many sales organizations. A recent survey demonstrates that the average salesperson is at least ten percent below his/her sales quota, and the average firm's ability to meet sales performance goals has dropped four percent (Matthews and Schenk 2018).

Emerging as a strategic initiative, sales enablement may be one defining connection in formally integrating efforts between the sales and marketing functions, centering on joint activities and refining customer-centric processes. Certainly, present strains to grow revenues are likely the impetus for choosing to invest in a sales enablement initiative (Matthews and Schenk 2018). Survey findings indicate 59% of organizations have invested in a sales enablement initiative as a “dedicated enablement person, program, or function” (Matthews and Schenk 2018, p. 6),

and sales enablement has spawned a burgeoning industry of service providers who target Fortune 500 accounts (Selling Power 2019).

Peterson and Dover (2020) define sales enablement as a “cross-functional assimilation (marketing, training, operations, management, automation, etc.) of content, processes, and technology that readies a firm to more productively assist the customer’s journey” (p.46). Sales enablement is based on enhancing a salesperson’s knowledge, competencies, skills, and accessible tools versus mechanical dimensions of day-to-day sales operations (Didner 2019). Sales enablement is a key to salesforce productivity, efficiency, and performance (Kada 2019; Peterson and Dover 2020). Early conceptualization of sales enablement expands to sales content services, training, coaching, value messaging, formalized collaboration with other organizational units, integrated enablement technology, enablement operations, and sales metrics (Matthews and Schenk 2018). The main premise of this study is that sales enablement is a strategic initiative which can create better workplaces, which in turn will reduce salesperson burnout and turnover intentions and increase sales performance.

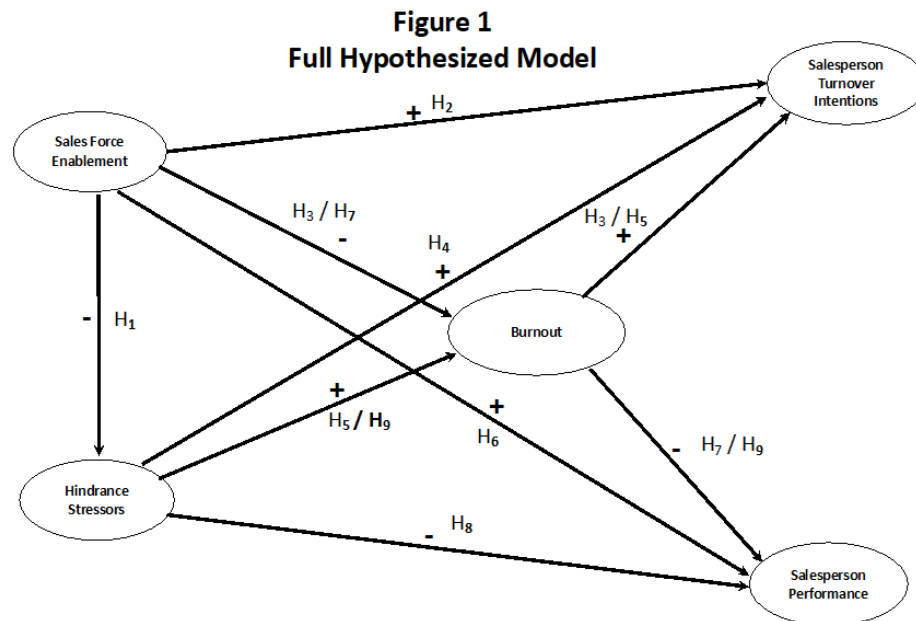
The motive behind this study is to determine if sales enablement is distinguishable from normal, day-to-day sales operations and to empirically test the influence of sales enablement as a job resource on individual sales outcomes. Hence, the purpose of this research is to discern if sales enablement (job resource) helps decrease hindrance-related stress and directly or indirectly reduces burnout and turnover intentions within the sales unit. Further, this study explores the effects of sales enablement on salesperson performance. We test hypothesized paths between sales enablement and hindrance-related stress leading to salesperson burnout, turnover intentions, and performance. The hypothesized model representing these relationships is shown as Figure 1.

## THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### Job Demands-Resources Model

Based on the Job Demands-Resources Model (JD-R Model), job demands and resources impact employee well-being (e.g., work engagement and burnout) and individual work performance (Bakker and Demerouti 2014; Demerouti et al. 2001). Job demands either serve to challenge the salesperson, or to hinder a salesperson’s personal growth and accomplishment (Podsakoff, Lepine, and Lepine 2007, p. 438). Job demands, such as time pressures, sales contests, sales goals, etc., can lead to a salesperson’s challenge-related stress (“challenge stressors”). These, in turn, can be positively related to job satisfaction, commitment, loyalty, work engagement, proactive coping behavior, idea generation, and role-based performance and negatively related to reducing burnout and turnover (Cavanaugh et al. 2000; Lepine, Lepine, and Jackson 2004; Loon and Casimir 2008; Podsakoff, Lepine, and Lepine 2007). On the other hand, job demands, such as organizational politics, internal rules, lack of personal control, etc. can lead to a salesperson’s hindrance-related stress (“hindrance stressors”). Such elements serve to demotivate and lead to adverse physical symptoms, emotional exhaustion, psychological strain, turnover intentions, reduced motivation, lower job performance, and withdrawal behavior (Cavanaugh et al. 2000; Crawford, Lepine, and Rich 2010; Lepine, Lepine, and Jackson 2004; Lepine, Podsakoff, and Lepine 2005; Podsakoff, Lepine, and Lepine 2007). While workers experience stress both internally and externally to the firm, challenge and hindrance stressors are internal, work-related, and distinct constructs (Boswell, Olson-Buchanan, and Lepine 2004; Pearsall, Ellis, and Stein 2009).

Job resources exist organizationally (e.g., compensation, rewards, career opportunities, role definition, job control, etc.), socially (e.g., team building, supervisory support, co-worker support, team climate, etc.), functionally (e.g., role clarity, participative decision-making, autonomy, level of tasks, etc.), and tactically (e.g., tools, performance feedback, skill variety, etc.) (Demerouti et al. 2001; Bakker, Demerouti, and Verbeke 2004). These



resources impact a salesperson's emotional and psychological well-being, assist in reaching performance goals, and promote personal development and growth (Schaufeli and Bakker 2004). Job resources buffer (lessen) the impact of job demands, specifically surrounding burnout (Bakker, Demerouti, and Euwema 2005). Job resources, such as customer orientation, sales and product training, and supervisor support, all positively affect salesperson emotional engagement and sales performance. Simultaneously, they lower emotional exhaustion, new product burnout, and turnover intentions (Lewin and Sager 2008; Matthews et al. 2016; Zablah et al. 2012). Allison et al. (2016) showed brand attachment is a job resource that increases brand-selling effort (engagement).

### Sales Enablement as a Job Resource

The sales practitioner literature provides that sales enablement consists of selling skills, step-by-step sales processes, sales content (collateral), enablement technology (CRM system), training/education, coaching and mentoring, sales analytics, and industry research that build salesforce fluency (CSO Insights 2016; Kada 2019; Moravik 2017). In one of the first academic studies, Peterson and Dover (2020) suggested sales enablement

comprises a technological component (sales and marketing automation, CRM and sales tools), a content component (scripts, email blasts, brochureware, collaterals, playbooks, etc.), and a people component (training, coaching, sales operations, etc.). Sales enablement is "an ecosystem that crosses all functional and hierarchical boundaries" (Bray and Sorey 2017, p.3) and endeavors to "deliver a positive customer experience by equipping salespeople with knowledge, skills, processes, and tools through cross-functional collaboration in order to increase sales velocity, sales retention, and productivity" (Didner 2019, p. 5).

Sales enablement would be a leveraged job resource, improving a salesperson's job capability. In light of theory discussed in Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), sales enablement as a job resource would embody "physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects" that "reduce job demands," would be "functional in achieving [sales] goals," and "stimulate personal growth, learning, and development" (p. 296). Sales enablement is then described as internal tools to sell, grow, and develop as the *cross-functional alignment of all organizational-supporting sales activities* (Schenk 2015). Simply, sales enablement helps with selling and reducing the stress associated with hitting sales performance goals, and would

assist in understanding customer goals, coordinating activities, and instilling the skills to be efficient and effective. In short, part of sales enablement's purpose is to reduce potential conflict occurring at both interpersonal (e.g., differing orientations, distrust, etc.) and organizational levels (e.g., misaligned objectives, lack of clear role definitions). Removing barriers and improving internal communication, knowledge sharing, and coordination should relieve internal tension (Malshe et al. 2017).

Bakker, Demerouti, and Euwema (2005) found support for the buffering effect when job demands interact with job resources, connoting that job resources buffer, or lower the impact of job demands. Specifically, they found that workers experience high fatigue and demoralization under conditions of high job demands and low job resources. In another study, Xanthopoulou et al. (2007) showed that job resources are more likely to buffer the relationship between emotional demands/patient harassment and burnout than buffer the relationship between workload/physical demands and burnout among home care employees. However, whether job resources moderate or buffer the effects of job demands can be dependent on the type of worker (Bakker, Demerouti, and Verbeke 2004). In a health care setting, Viotti et al. (2015) demonstrated that job content level resources buffer verbal aggression on job burnout for nurses, but found no effects among nursing aides. Given the totality of previous studies, sales enablement may act as a job resource, thus the following hypothesis is proposed:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** Sales enablement directly decreases salesperson perceptions hindrance-related stress ("hindrance stressors").

### The Burnout Syndrome

Emotional exhaustion is manifested as felt stress and depletion of physical and emotional energy (Leiter and Maslach 2004) which leads to personal physical fatigue, frustration, distress and ineffectiveness (Maslach and Jackson 1981; Rothmann, Steyn, and Mostert 2005). Emotionally-exhausted salespeople are likely to engage in frontline deviance and have lower job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and higher turnover (Babakus et al. 1999; Boles,

Johnston, and Hair 1997; Darrat, Atinc, and Babin 2016). Cynicism or depersonalization results in personal disengagement, callousness, apathy towards what happens at work, and harboring feelings of blame for customer problems (Maslach and Jackson 1981; Rothmann, Steyn, and Mostert 2005). Burned-out salespeople expend higher physical and emotional energy to perform selling requirements, feel frustrated, and experience personal conflict (Lewin and Sager 2008; Sand and Miyazka 2000).

A robust stream of research exists for the impact of burnout on organizational and individual outcomes. Emotional exhaustion mediates the relationship between job demands and job resources with job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Edmondson, Matthews, and Ambrose 2019). Darrat, Atinc, and Babin (2016) found that emotional exhaustion serves as a mediator between leader-member exchange and organizational deviance, turnover intentions, and frontline deviance. Matthews et al. (2016) noted that sales training and managerial support reduce salesperson emotional exhaustion. By offering coordinated job resource investments (i.e., sales enablement) to benefit the salesperson's readiness state (via improved content, alignment with marketing, coaching), improved supervisory support would increase overall job performance as it has in other instances (Bakker and Demerouti 2017). Hence, the focus on improving salesperson productivity and efficiency should reduce emotional exhaustion and depersonalization that would be detrimental to customer interactions (Maslach and Jackson 1981). For a robust summary of the relevant literature relating to burnout, see Hollet-Haudebert, Mulki, and Fournier (2011), and for additional understanding, Table 1 highlights relevant studies on salesforce burnout.

Burnout is normally considered work-related (Schaufeli and Enzmann 1998) and shown to lead to physical fatigue and feelings of frustration, overextension, distress, ineffectiveness, adverse perceptions of the manager, lower job satisfaction, and reduced organizational commitment (Babakus et al. 1999; Maslach and Jackson 1981; Sand and Miyazaki 2000). Earlier conceptualization

posited that burnout consists of three components - emotional exhaustion-energy, cynicism-involvement (depersonalization), and inefficacy-efficacy (diminishment of personal accomplishment) (Cordes and Dougherty 1993; Maslach and Jackson 1981; Maslach and Leiter 2008; Shepherd, Tashchian, and Ridnour 2011). However, Maslach and Leiter (2008) concluded that “emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are the two primary measures of burnout” due to their “strong, robust relationship between them” where “these two dimensions ‘go together’— they both appear strongly in people experiencing burnout, and they both fade away in people experiencing engagement with their work” (p. 501). Other studies suggest that diminishment of personal accomplishments (inefficacy) is an independent construct from burnout (Babakus Yavas, and Ashill 2009; Maslach and Leiter 2008) or that personal accomplishment is actually an antecedent of burnout (Lewin and Sager 2007; Rutherford et al. 2015) or an outcome of burnout, comprised of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Shepard, Tashchian, and Ridnour 2011). Hence, the conceptualization of burnout can be narrowed to consist of worker emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (Babakus, Yavas, and Ashill 2009).

**Salesforce Turnover**

Salesforce turnover detrimentally affects a firm’s revenues, operating costs, and customer perceptions (DeConinck and Johnson 2009; Sunder et al. 2017). Recruiting activities are expensive and can span over six months (Maestro 2017). Once a sales recruit is hired, the company absorbs higher costs associated with new hire orientation and training on product offerings, service delivery processes, selling processes, and sales technology tools (DeConinck and Johnson 2009; Sunder et al. 2017). A bad sales hire can typically cost the firm 75-150% of the salesperson’s annual sales quota (Burdette and Thomson 2010) and may lead to other sunk costs, such as past paid incentives (SPIFFs, bonuses, stock options, etc.) and severance compensation to salespeople who depart the company (Harvard Business Review 2017). On the non-financial side, salesperson turnover negatively impacts customer orientation, customer relationship management, service delivery, and firm brand image (Subramony and Holtom 2012).

Salespeople obviously leave organizations for varied reasons. For instance, perceived role ambiguity is positively associated with turnover

**Table 1: Antecedents, Mediators, and Outcomes of Salesperson Burnout**

Source	Sample	Antecedents	Mediators	Dependent	Statistically Significant Outcomes
Hollet-Haudebert, Mulki, and Fournier (2011)	French insurance industry n=221	Role conflict, decision latitude, and role ambiguity	Depersonalization and personal non-accomplishment	Organizational commitment	Role conflict increases depersonalization. Decision latitude reduces depersonalization and non-accomplishment. Decision latitude - personal non-accomplishment path moderated by role conflict. Depersonalization and non-accomplishment negatively related to org commitment.
Shepherd, Tashchian, and Ridnour (2011)	Various industries n=234	Role conflict and role ambiguity	Burnout	Job satisfaction	Role conflict increases emotional exhaustion and reduces personal accomplishment. Customer-oriented role ambiguity increases exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion decreases job satisfaction. Reduced personal accomplishment decreases job satisfaction.
Ambrose, Rutherford, Shepherd, and Tashchian (2014)	Various industries n=226	Role ambiguity based on company, family, boss, customer, other managers, and coworkers	Burnout	Job satisfaction and job performance	Role ambiguity decrease personal accomplishment (partial), job performance (partial) and satisfaction (partial). Role ambiguity enhances depersonalization (partial). Burnout mediates role ambiguity and satisfaction path (partial). Burnout partially mediate role ambiguity facets and burnout.
Rutherford, Shepherd, and Tashchian (2015)	Various industries n=249	Role ambiguity and role conflict	Personal accomplishment, depersonalization and emotional exhaustion	Job performance and job satisfaction	Role conflict decreases personal accomplishment, increases depersonalization. Role ambiguity decreases job performance and satisfaction. Personal accomplishment decreases depersonalization and emotional exhaustion, increases satisfaction. Depersonalization increases emotional exhaustion. Emotional exhaustion decreases performance and satisfaction.

Table 1 (Continued): Antecedents, Mediators, and Outcomes of Salesperson Burnout

Source	Sample	Antecedents	Mediators	Dependent	Statistically Significant Outcomes
Matthews, Zablah, Hair and Marshall (2016)	Various industries n=235	Customer orientation, sales training and supervisor support	Emotional engagement and emotional exhaustion	Sales performance and turnover intentions	Customer orientation- positive indirect effect on performance via emotional engagement. Sales training- positive indirect effect on performance via emotional engagement. Supervisor support- negative indirect effect on turnover intention, - positive indirect effect on job performance via emotional engagement.
Matthews, Beeler, Zablah and Hair (2018)	Various industries n=235	Autonomy to create value and autonomy to appropriate value		Depersonalization, emotional exhaustion, and accomplishment	Autonomy to create value decreases emotional exhaustion, and depersonalization, increases personal accomplishment. Autonomy to appropriate value increases customer depersonalization. Emotional exhaustion decreases accomplishment, increases depersonalization.
Edmondson, Matthews, and Ambrose (2019)	Meta-analysis of 29 studies	Role conflict and ambiguity, work overload, and organizational support	Emotional exhaustion	Org commitment, turnover intentions, and job performance	Role ambiguity moderately increases emotional exhaustion. Role conflict, work overload, increases emotional exhaustion. Negative relationship between emotional exhaustion, supervisory support and perceived org support. Job performance moderates negative relationship with emotional exhaustion. Turnover intentions positive affect on emotional exhaustion.

intentions (Jaramillo, Mulki, and Solomon 2006). Organizations exhibiting lower sales performance and customer satisfaction levels have been shown to suffer higher turnover (Sunder et al. 2017). Further, salespeople who experience emotional exhaustion and depersonalization would be tempted to leave the organization as well (Babakus, Yavas, and Ashill 2011; Cordes and Dougherty 1993; Low et al. 2001). It would be expected that salespeople possessing higher hindrance-related stress (hindrance stressors) may have higher burnout rates and, in turn, higher turnover intentions. However, if sales enablement is a job resource, the firm should boast happier salespeople, thus potentially reducing burnout and turnover intentions. Salesperson burnout would then mediate the relationship between sales enablement and hindrance-related stress (hindrance stressors) and turnover intentions. Based on the above, the following hypotheses are provided:

- H<sub>2</sub>:** Sales enablement has a direct negative effect on turnover intentions.
- H<sub>3</sub>:** Salesperson burnout mediates the relationship between sales enablement and turnover intentions.
- H<sub>4</sub>:** Salesperson hindrance-related stress (hindrance stressors) has a direct positive effect on turnover intentions.
- H<sub>5</sub>:** Salesperson burnout mediates the relationship between hindrance-related stress (hindrance stressors) and turnover intentions.

### Salesperson Performance

Sales performance represents sales activity-based actions or behaviors that lead to sales outcomes or results (Anderson and Oliver 1987). Many times, sales manager perceptions of sales performance differ from those of sales representatives. Sales managers push for quantified and precisely measured sales outcomes based on correct sales behaviors, performed in the correct way. Then again, many salespeople view sales performance based on overall sales outcome success (Zallico, Pullins, and Mallin 2009) despite behaviors undertaken to meet sales management's expectations. Best practices for measuring sales performance call for metrics that are centric to the quantity of sales activities (number of dials, email blasts, etc.), activity efficiency ratios (calls, connects, meetings, opportunities landed), and ratios of activity results versus the fulfillment of activity goals (as actual objectives fulfilled) (Rotenberg and Baker 2013). Such metrics may include year-to-date sales volume, sales-by-quarters, new sales landed, retention of sales ratios, and average margin percentages (Miller 2009).

Jordan and Vazzana (2012) proposed that sales organizations establish sales goals and objectives relating to market coverage, sales force capability, customer focus, and product focus. Hence, firms monitor total selling effort with customers and prospects, such as the number of selling hours, percentage of customers called, and customer engagement time to achieve market penetration. The attainment of sales force capability directly ties

to effective use of capacity (win/loss ratios, percent of deals advancing by stage, and length of the sales cycle), and the achievement of customer-focused goals is based on capturing, retaining, and growing customers (number of new accounts, percentage customer retention, and percentage share of wallet). Finally, product focus objectives relate to selling products and services that are measured as revenue by product, cross-sell rate, and average deal size (Jordan and Vazzana 2012).

Zallocco, Pullins, and Mallin (2009) reinforced the notion that sales performance consists of effectiveness and efficiency. Sales effectiveness can be internally-oriented and consist of competencies such as technical knowledge, listening and communication skills, teamwork, etc. It can also be externally-oriented, at the level of customer engagement, channel and customer survey feedback, new accounts introduced to products/services, competitor tracking, etc. Sales efficiency might be selling activities, internally-oriented, and/or consist of productivity, account profitability (account margin), time management, number of calls made, and number of presentations. Sales efficiency can also be externally-oriented and be measured as closing ratios related to number of calls made, number of presentations, and sales penetration per account (Zallocco, Pullins, and Mallin 2009).

Matthew and Schenk (2018) indicated that sales enablement directly correlates with organizational performance outcomes. For instance, formal coaching resulted in improved win rates (+14 percent), and a dynamic coaching process exhibited a 28 percent increase in win rates versus firms without a formal sales enablement presence. Companies with a formal charter-based approach to sales enablement achieved a 74 percent in quota, compared to the average 58 percent. Effective content services correlated to an 8 percent improvement in quota attainment, while training improved quota attainment between 18-22 percent. Formal cross-functional collaboration resulted in a seven percent rise in quota attainment, and integrated technology (sharing content via email or multiple repositories) also saw positive results (p. 33-34).

Past studies provide mixed support as to whether burnout has a direct impact on job performance. Certainly, salespeople who engage with customers who complain or have excessive demands will experience higher job burnout, which would seem to negatively impact job performance. Singh, Goolsby, and Rhoads (1994) outlined that burnout has a significant negative impact on behavior outcomes or performance and psychological outcomes among customer service representatives. Peasley et al. (2020) found that emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishments have negative effects on sales performance, while Bakker, Demerouti, and Verbeke (2004) indicated that emotional exhaustion negatively impacts in-role performance. In yet another study, Babakus, Yavas, and Ashill (2009) found partial support that burnout mediates the relationship between job demands and job performance.

However, other research fails to show conclusive evidence that burnout affects individual work performance. Based on a meta-analysis of 16 research studies, Taris (2006) posited that emotional exhaustion seems to produce a negative effect on performance, but a lack of conclusive evidence exists that depersonalization directly impacts performance. Meanwhile, based on a study of MBA students, burnout is not associated with overall actual performance (Garden 1991), and Bakker, van Emmerik, and van Riet (2008) showed that emotional exhaustion fails to mediate the relationship between job demands and performance, but cynicism (depersonalization) is a mediator between job resources and performance. Hence, clean and conclusive findings, whether burnout or its core components have an effect on performance, remain non-definitive.

Finally, job demands can affect overall sales performance. Customer demandingness, serving as a challenge stressor, positively impacts performance (Jaramillo, Mulki, and Boles 2013). Lepine, Podsakoff, and Lepine's (2005) meta-analysis shows hindrance stressors have a direct negative impact on performance and an indirect impact on performance through strains and motivation which serve as mediator variables. In a study of Chinese law

enforcement officers, Liu et al. (2013) found that hindrance stressors had a negative influence on performance, especially among employees with high conscientiousness. Furthermore, in work environments involving high levels of the transactional leadership style, the indirect effects of hindrance stressors on job performance through organizational justice are mitigated (Zhang et al. 2014). Consistent with the preceding discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H<sub>6</sub>:** Sales enablement has a direct positive effect on performance.
- H<sub>7</sub>:** Salesperson burnout mediates the relationship between sales enablement and performance.
- H<sub>8</sub>:** Salesperson hindrance-related stress (hindrance stressors) has a direct negative effect on performance.
- H<sub>9</sub>:** Salesperson burnout serves as a mediator between hindrance stressors and performance.

## METHODS

### Procedure

Data was gathered over a 10-day period via a web-based survey using a panel of participants. Other academic studies in sales have successfully used commercial survey panels representing cross-sections of industries to effectively conduct surveys and test conceptual models (Matthews et al. 2016; 2018). The panel provider maintains scores on each respondent that are based on behavioral patterns, such as time spent on surveys, inconsistent profile data reporting, and human-reviewed responses flagged as low quality. Panel participants, having scores that fall below the acceptable threshold are eliminated from the platform. To reduce measurement error, proprietary safeguards, such as invisible ReCaptcha to screen for bots, virtual fingerprinting, and scoring based on historical completions, are used to eliminate outliers and to ensure only unique panelists complete the survey. Respondents were personally incented or donated their incentive to a non-profit organization of their choice. The final sample consisted of 302 business-to-business salespeople from manufacturing, finance, insurance, real estate, wholesale trade, merchandising, transportation,

communications, and utilities industries. The average age of respondents was 40.3 years, while the average tenure in a sales role was 10.9 years. Employer company size varied, with 28% working for firms up to 50 employees; 19% working for firms with 51-250 employees; 16% working for firms with 251-1,000 employees; and 37% working for companies with more than 1,000 employees. Approximately 53% of the subjects were female and 47% were male.

### Measures for Hypothesized Model

Multi-item scales were used to measure sales enablement and hindrance stressors leading to burnout, performance, and turnover intentions. These scales were tailored to align with a sales context and varied to avoid common method variance associated with same scale endpoints and potential anchoring effects (Matthews et al. 2016; Podsakoff et al. 2003). All of the perceptual measures (sales enablement, hindrance stressors, burnout, turnover intentions, and performance) were subjected to a single exploratory factor analysis (principal components) with direct oblimin rotation which yielded a 7-factor solution accounting for 70.2% of the total variance, collectively. The first factor accounted for 27.9% of the variance, suggesting that common method bias is not an issue (Podsakoff et al. 2003).

Based on scale frameworks (Bottger et al. 2017; Farooq 2016; 2017; Hinkin 1995), a 12-item measure for sales enablement was created. The scale was refined based on a thorough review of the sales enablement literature (e.g., Bray and Sorey 2017; Cohen 2019; Didner 2019; Matthews and Schenk 2018; Peterson and Dover 2020). The resulting scale is a 7-point Likert measure, anchored by "1" representing "strongly disagree" and "7" being "strongly agree." A small-sample beta test was conducted to ensure that respondents could properly access and answer the online survey. The results supported the sales enablement scale showing strong internal reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ ) (cf. Nunnally 1978; Streiner 2003). Inter-item correlations were satisfactory (.38 to .77), suggesting that using 12 scale items does not likely inflate Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Further, the appearance of the construct's histogram suggested no central



response tendency (Voss, Stem, and Fotopoulos 2000).

Farooq (2016, p. 76) calls for assessing construct dimensionality using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) followed by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The exploratory factor analysis of the sales enablement scale, using direct oblimin rotation, yielded two factors accounting for 64.5 percent of the total variance. However, two scale items representing technology aspects (e.g., CRM systems) cross-loaded across two factors. CFA was performed for all 12 scale items showing all estimates have critical ratio values exceeding 1.96, indicating statistical significance ( $p < .00$ ), and standardized regression weights spanning .63 to .80. The average variance extracted was .56, which is greater than the cut-off of 0.5, and the composite reliability was .94, indicating good convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The results exhibited strong model fit for sales enablement as a unidimensional construct ( $X^2 = 65.4$ ,  $df = 45$ ,  $p = .03$ ; CFI = .99; SRMR = .03; RMSEA = .04) (Byrne 2010; Hu and Bentler 1999; Schreiber et al. 2006). Sales enablement is thus determined to be a reflective model, since it measures the degree at which firms implement various elements of a sales enablement initiative and is based on the existing theoretical foundation described above. Additionally, strong empirical support exists for a reflective model based on robust inter-item correlations among the scale items, a high internal reliability coefficient (Cronbach  $\alpha$ ), and the goodness-of-fit index from confirmatory factor analysis (Coltman et al. 2008). The Appendix provides the scale items for "Sales Enablement" with the corresponding internal reliability coefficient.

For hindrance stressors, Cavanaugh et al.'s (2000) five-item scale using a 5-point semantic differential scale was selected and modified, anchored by "1" representing "produces no stress" and "5" representing "produces a great deal of stress." Exploratory factor analysis with oblimin rotation disclosed all items load on a single factor accounting for 50.1% of the variance, and the scale exhibited customary internal reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .75$ ) (cf. Nunnally 1978; Streiner 2003). The average variance extracted was .50 and the composite

reliability was .83 indicating acceptable convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Further confirmatory factor analysis showed strong model fit for hindrance stressors as a unidimensional construct ( $X^2 = 3.98$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .14$ ; CFI = .99; SRMR = .02; RMSEA = .06) (Byrne 2010; Hu and Bentler 1999; Schreiber et al. 2006). The Appendix provides the scale items for "Hindrance Stressors" with the corresponding internal reliability coefficient.

A reduced version of Maslach and Jackson's (1981) scale, first used by Babakus, Yavas, and Ashill (2009) is employed to measure "Burnout," composed of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. Both of these constructs are measured using 3-item scales, respectively, using a 5-point semantic differential scale anchored by "1" representing "strongly disagree" to "5" representing "strongly agree." Exploratory factor analysis with direct oblimin rotation showed two factors accounting for 76.8% of the total variance. Both emotional exhaustion (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ ) and depersonalization (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .78$ ) showed proper internal reliability (Nunnally 1978; Streiner 2003). The average variance extracted for emotional exhaustion was .81 and for depersonalization was .70, of which both are greater than the cut-off of 0.5. The composite reliability for emotional exhaustion was .96 and for depersonalization was .88, indicating good convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Next, second-order confirmatory factor analysis on the construct "Burnout" revealed good model fit ( $X^2 = 9.9$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p = .20$ ; CFI = 1.00; SRMR = .03; RMSEA = .04) (Byrne 2010; Hu and Bentler 1999; Schreiber et al. 2006).

Both outcome variables are based on modified versions of scales in Babakus, Yavas, and Ashill (2009). The construct for turnover intentions consists of a 4-item scale based on a 5-point semantic differential scale, anchored by "1" representing "strongly disagree" to "5" representing "strongly agree." Exploratory factor analysis with oblimin rotation showed all items load on a single factor accounting for 77.9% of the variance, while the scale exhibited strong internal reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ) (Nunnally 1978; Streiner 2003). The average variance extracted was .78, which is greater than the cut-off of 0.5, and the composite

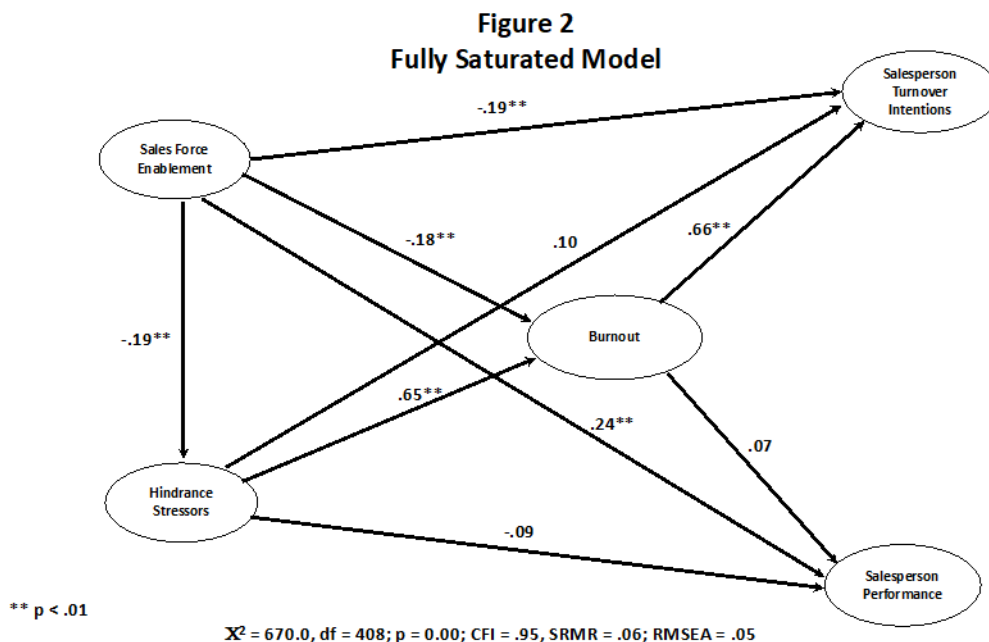
reliability was .93 indicating good convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). Results of confirmatory factor analysis showed strong model fit for turnover intentions as a unidimensional construct ( $X^2 = 1.13$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = .29$ ; CFI = 1.00; SRMR = .01; RMSEA = .02) (Byrne 2010; Hu and Bentler 1999; Schreiber et al. 2006). Finally, performance consists of a 4-item scale based on a 5-point semantic differential scale anchored by “1” representing “strongly disagree” to “5” representing “strongly agree.” Exploratory factor analysis with oblimin rotation showed all items load on a single factor accounting for 80% of the variance, while the scale exhibited strong internal reliability (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .92$ ) (Nunnally 1978; Streiner 2003). The average variance extracted was .80, again greater than the cut-off of 0.5, and the composite reliability was .94 indicating good convergent validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The results of a confirmatory factor analysis showed strong model fit for performance as a unidimensional construct ( $X^2 = 6.0$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = .05$ ; CFI = 1.00; SRMR = .01; RMSEA = .08) (Byrne 2010; Hu and Bentler 1999; Schreiber et al. 2006). Refer to the Appendix for scale items for both turnover intentions and performance and internal consistency reliabilities.

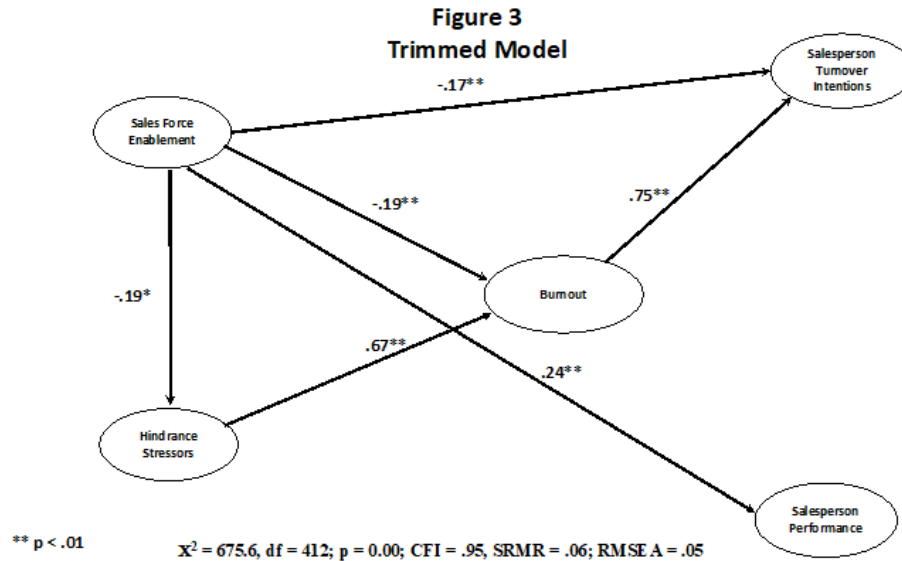
## TESTING OF THE HYPOTHESIZED MODEL

The proposed path model was tested using structural equation modeling with maximum likelihood algorithm to calculate parameter estimates and associated t-values for the hypothesized model. Overall results show the fully saturated model provides good fit to the data  $X^2 = 670.0$ ,  $df = 408$ ;  $p = 0.00$ ; CFI = .95, SRMR = .06; RMSEA = .05) (see Byrne 2010; Hu and Bentler 1999; Schreiber et al. 2006). The model attributes a significant portion of the variance on Burnout (50%), Salesperson Performance (6%), and Turnover Intentions (64%). Figure 2 provides results from testing the saturated model. Overall results indicate the trimmed model provides good fit to the data ( $X^2 = 675.6$ ,  $df = 412$ ;  $p = 0.00$ ; CFI = .95, SRMR = .06; RMSEA = .05) (Byrne 2010; Hu and Bentler 1999; Schreiber et al. 2006) as shown in Figure 3.

### Testing of Direct Effects

Hypothesis 1 was confirmed, indicating that sales enablement has a direct, negative effect on hindrance-related stress ( $\beta = -.19$ ,  $-2.69$ ). The direct, negative effect of sales enablement as a job resource on hindrance-related stress as a job





demand has been shown in past studies as the “buffering effect” (Tadic, Bakker, and Oerlemans 2015). These results demonstrate that sales enablement employs a direct, negative effect on salesperson burnout ( $\beta = -.18, t = -2.91$ ). In assessing the direct effects of sales enablement on the two outcome variables, sales enablement was found to have a direct, negative impact on salesperson turnover intentions ( $\beta = -.19, t = -3.32$ ) which provides support for Hypothesis 2. Furthermore, sales enablement has a direct, positive impact on salesperson performance ( $\beta = .24, t = 3.58$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 6 is supported.

Second, the effects of hindrance-related stress on salesperson burnout, salesperson turnover intentions, and salesperson performance were assessed. The results show that hindrance-related stress has a direct, positive influence on salesperson burnout ( $\beta = .65, t = 7.26$ ). However, hindrance-related stress fails to have a significant effect on salesperson turnover intentions ( $\beta = .10, t = .94$ ), thus failing to provide support for Hypothesis 4. In like manner, the results fail to show that hindrance-related stress has a significant effect on salesperson performance ( $\beta = -.09, t = -.87$ ), hence Hypothesis 8 is not supported.

Finally, the effects of salesperson burnout on salesperson turnover intentions and salesperson performance were tested. Salesperson burnout was found to have a direct, positive impact on

salesperson turnover intentions ( $\beta = .66, t = 4.76$ ). However, salesperson burnout does not have a significant relationship with salesperson performance ( $\beta = .07, t = .63$ ). See Table 3 showing results of the direct effects analysis for the fully saturated model.

#### Indirect Effects of Sales Enablement on Burnout, Turnover Intentions, and Performance

To test the hypothesized indirect effects, prescriptive frameworks for testing proximal and distal mediation based on Hair et al. (2019, p. 746-47) and Shrout and Bolger (2002, p. 438) were applied. In doing so, the correlations between the variables within the proposed paths (see Hair et al. 2019) were assessed, followed by bootstrapping analysis using Amos 26 with 5,000 iterations and 95% confidence to test for indirect mediation effects. First, sales enablement’s indirect effect on salesperson burnout through hindrance-related stress as the mediator (Sales Enablement → Hindrance-Related Stress → Salesperson Burnout) was measured. All correlations between sales enablement, hindrance-related stress, and salesperson burnout are statistically significant. See the construct correlation matrix in Table 2. Sales enablement was found to have a direct, negative relationship with salesperson burnout ( $\beta = -.18, t = -2.91$ ). Indirect paths within Sales Enablement → Hindrance-Related Stress → Salesperson Burnout were recoded as user-

defined estimands which provide estimates with confidence intervals and significance values (Amos Development Corporation 2020). The results reveal that sales enablement has a significant indirect effect on salesperson burnout (estimate = -.08, CIs [-.18, -.01], p = .02) through hindrance-related stress as the moderator. Since sales enablement has a direct path with salesperson burnout and indirect path where hindrance-related stress is the mediator, this portion of the model represents partial mediation. See Table 4.

The second mediation analysis tested Hypothesis 3, representing the path as Sales Enablement → Salesperson Burnout → Salesperson Turnover Intentions. As shown in Table 2, the correlations between sales enablement, salesperson burnout, and salesperson turnover intentions are significant. Based on the previous discussion confirming Hypothesis 2, sales enablement is found to

have a direct, negative impact on salesperson turnover intentions ( $\beta = -.19, t = -3.32$ ). Indirect paths within Sales Enablement → Salesperson Burnout → Salesperson Turnover Intentions were recoded as user-defined estimands. The results reveal that sales enablement has a significant indirect effect on salesperson turnover intentions (estimate = -.09, CIs [-.23, -.02], p = .01). Since the results yield that sales enablement has both a direct effect on turnover intentions and an indirect effect through burnout as a mediator, this portion of the model represents partial mediation and confirmation of Hypothesis 3. Refer to Table 4.

Third, to test Hypothesis 7, the indirect effects of sales enablement on salesperson performance with salesperson burnout as the mediator (Sales Enablement → Salesperson Burnout → Salesperson Performance) were analyzed. Results show that the correlations between sales

**TABLE 2:  
Construct Properties**

		Mean	SD	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Sales Enablement	60.36	14.59	.56	1.00				
2.	Hindrance Stressors	14.05	4.71	.50	-.15**	1.00			
3.	Burnout	15.64	5.51	.53	-.23**	.46**	1.00		
4.	Turnover Intentions	9.33	4.92	.78	-.34**	.47**	.59**	1.00	
5.	Performance	15.92	3.69	.80	-.23**	-.05	-.09	-.08	1.00

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**TABLE 3:  
Fully Saturated Model Results**

Path	$\beta$	t-value
Sales Enablement → Hindrance Stressors	-.19	-2.69**
Sales Enablement → Burnout	-.18	-2.91**
Hindrance Stressors → Burnout	.65	7.26**
Burnout → Turnover Intentions	.66	4.76**
Burnout → Performance	.07	.63
Sales Enablement → Turnover Intentions	-.19	-3.32**
Sales Enablement → Performance	.24	3.58**
Hindrance Stressors → Turnover Intentions	.10	.94
Hindrance Stressors → Performance	-.09	-.87

\*\* Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

**TABLE 4:**  
**Indirect Mediated Effects**

	$\beta$ (p value)	Mediation Effect
Sales Enablement → Hindrance Stressors → Burnout	-.12 (.02)	Partial
H <sub>3</sub> : Sales Enablement → Burnout → Turnover Intentions	-.22 (.00)	Partial
H <sub>5</sub> : Hindrance Stressors → Burnout → Turnover Intentions	.42 (.00)	Full
H <sub>7</sub> : Sales Enablement → Burnout → Performance	-.00 (.81)	No Mediation
H <sub>9</sub> : Hindrance Stressors → Burnout → Performance	.05 (.56)	No Mediation

enablement, salesperson burnout, and salesperson performance are significant. See Table 2. Sales enablement exerts a direct, positive impact on salesperson performance ( $\beta = .24$ ,  $t = 3.58$ ) as confirmation for Hypothesis 6. Indirect paths within Sales Enablement → Salesperson Burnout → Salesperson Performance were recoded as user-defined estimands. The results reveal that sales enablement fails to have a significant indirect effect on salesperson performance through burnout (estimate =  $-.01$ , CIs  $[-.05, .02]$ ,  $p = .43$ ). Thus Hypothesis 7 is not confirmed. See Table 4.

#### Indirect Effects of Hindrance Stressors on Turnover Intentions and Performance

The fourth analysis tested Hypothesis 5 by examining the indirect effects of hindrance-related stress on salesperson turnover intentions through salesperson burnout serving as mediator (Hindrance-Related Stress → Salesperson Burnout → Salesperson Turnover Intentions). All correlations between hindrance-related stress, salesperson burnout, and salesperson turnover intentions are statistically significant. Refer to Table 2. The results fail to confirm Hypothesis 4 ( $\beta = .10$ ,  $t = .94$ ), therefore we conclude no direct path exists between hindrance-related stress and salesperson turnover intentions. Indirect paths within Hindrance-Related Stress → Salesperson Burnout → Salesperson Turnover Intentions were recoded as user-defined estimands. The results reveal that hindrance-related stress has a significant indirect effect on salesperson turnover intentions through salesperson burnout (estimate =  $.49$ , CIs  $[.26, 1.01]$ ,  $p = .00$ )

confirming Hypothesis 5. These results indicate that the path, Hindrance-Related Stress → Salesperson Burnout → Salesperson Turnover Intentions is full mediation. See Table 4.

For the final mediation analysis, the indirect effects of hindrance-related stress on salesperson performance through salesperson burnout as the mediator (Hindrance-related Stress → Salesperson Burnout → Salesperson Performance) were assessed. Results indicate that the correlation between hindrance-related stress and salesperson burnout is significant, but the correlation between hindrance-related stress and salesperson performance is insignificant. See Table 2. According to Hair et al. (2019), insignificant correlations indicate a lack of indirect effects between a distal variable and an outcome variable. Results show that hindrance-related stress fails to have a direct influence on salesperson performance ( $\beta = -.09$ ,  $t = -.87$ ), indicating a lack of support for Hypothesis 8. Indirect paths within Hindrance-Related Stress → Salesperson Burnout → Salesperson Performance were recoded as user-defined estimands showing that hindrance-related stress does not have a significant indirect effect on salesperson performance (estimate =  $.04$ , CIs  $[-.12, .23]$ ,  $p = .55$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 9 is not confirmed. See Table 4.

#### DISCUSSION AND MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

This study's results align with previous findings outside of the sales unit, confirming the importance of the Jobs-Demands Resource Model in the context of selling (e.g., Fernet, Austin, and Vallerand 2012; Kubicek, Paskavn,

and Korunka 2015). Managers are under constant pressure to grow sales for the firm (higher organizational and individual sales performance), while simultaneously recruiting and retaining sales talent (lower turnover intentions). This study's findings clearly note that a new internal resource allocation called "sales enablement" (job resource) can reduce burnout (emotional exhaustion and depersonalization) and ultimately help lower salesperson turnover intentions, while also increasing salesperson performance. Second, self-reported, hindrance-related stress (hindrance stressors) can increase salesperson burnout, which ultimately leads to higher turnover intentions. Stated even more succinctly, if firms do not enable their salespeople and minimize excessive hindrance-related stress, a significant chance exists that the salespeople will quit or underperform.

The authors suggest sales enablement offers sales content services; professional development and training for products; services and selling skills; and ongoing salesforce coaching (Matthews and Schenk 2018). Additionally, we posit sales enablement extends to technology tools that improve productivity and to a customer relationship management system that promotes collaboration across departments. It also allows the salesperson to access real-time customer information, dashboards, and reports that track sales activities. Sales enablement allows sales leadership to ascertain salesforce perceptions relating to the firm's implementation and oversight. Further, sales enablement exerts a direct negative influence on salesperson burnout and turnover intentions, but a direct positive impact on salesperson performance.

Hindrance stressors were found to have a direct positive impact on turnover intentions, which was not unexpected in light of previous findings. While Podsakoff, Lepine, and Lepine (2007) found that hindrance stressors had a strong, positive association with turnover intentions, there is existing theory suggesting the effects of hindrance-related stress are both direct and indirect. For example, Babakus, Yavas, and Karatepe (2008) found job demands have a direct, positive influence on turnover intentions among hospitality employees. As an illustration of indirect influences, Schaubroeck,

Cotton, and Jennings (1989) found that job tensions impact worker-perceived attitudes (job satisfaction and organizational commitment) which in turn affect turnover intentions. The model also confirms that hindrance-related stressors have a strong association with turnover intentions through full mediation via burnout as the mediator (Hindrance Stressors → Burnout → Turnover Intentions). As salespeople experience hindrance-related stress, they experience emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (burnout) which over time can lead them to desire to seek employment elsewhere when an opportunity arises. However, hindrance-related stress was not found to directly or indirectly impact sales performance through burnout. While this seems counter-intuitive, this finding suggests that stressed out salespeople who face internal hindrances in their jobs can still be motivated to perform well and meet performance goals. If a salesperson is faced with elevated levels of hindrance stressors and wants a new place to work, they must demonstrate high sales performance in order to be attractive to another firm. This is a common occurrence in the sales occupation; to move from an unhealthy environment, one still must deliver on key performance indicators to be attractive to others.

Where possible, sales management should support the creation of sales enablement offerings to the salesforce and aid the various other firm functions that must work together through formal collaboration (e.g., marketing, sales ops, learning/training, technology) to improve a salesperson's productivity and efficiency in serving customer needs. Sales enablement services along with sales enabling technology obviously have beneficial ramifications, including ultimate overall firm and individual sales performance. Moreover, technology has been evidenced to be highly effective for allowing sales organizations to collaborate across departments as a coveted outcome on any level (Holger, Hoyer, and Rübsaamen 2010). An interesting finding is that sales enablement, serving as a possible job resource, seems to buffer the influence of hindrance-related stress on burnout. This finding aligns with previous research showing that job resources reduce the effects of hindrance stressors (Bakker, Demerouti, and

Euwema 2005; Tadic, Bakker, and Oerlemans 2015). However, we find that burnout fails to significantly impact performance. Hence, the indirect mediation analysis does not confirm that burnout mediates the path between hindrance stressors nor sales enablement and performance.

Logical conventions would suggest that a salesperson experiencing perceptions of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization would lose the motivation to perform. However, when considering the sales role, this may not always be the case. It is certainly plausible that burned out salespeople could still meet performance goals, especially when they are compensated with outcome-based compensation. In this case, the salesperson may be motivated to achieve sales goals to receive commissions or spiffs, despite feeling weary from the burnout syndrome. Second, many salespeople sell products or services that have recurring revenues (renewals, multi-year contracts, etc.) where the salesperson's book has a high customer retention ratio. In those cases, a salesperson could be highly burned out, but possibly still meet sales performance goals. Finally, despite feeling burned out, it is to the salesperson's advantage to show high sales results on his/her resume when considering applying for another sales job.

If sales enablement can reduce salesperson burnout and turnover intentions, then great attention, and perhaps resources, should be allocated to introducing salesforce services that allow salespeople to more efficiently perform their jobs. While some of these items might be offered now, sales enablement may not be presented in a coherent or accessible manner to the salesforce. Some of these items may include, but are not limited to, excellent content management solutions or key-performance indicator reports such as win-loss reports or sales cycle empirics that assist the sales professional in performing the job (Matthews and Schenk 2018). Certainly, there has been a call for more data on proper sales coaching (Badrinarayanan et al. 2015) to sustain more effective salespeople. While sales enablement will play a role in this coaching opportunity, the line in the sand where sales enablement ends and sales management starts is still being discussed in most circles.

In consideration of burnout, it is certainly logical that emotional exhaustion and depersonalization lead salespeople to treat customers and co-workers as annoyances or outright impediments to their job (Maslach and Jackson 1981). Thus, opportunities to reduce this caustic situation will benefit the individual, the firm, and all other stakeholders. Eliminating hindrance stressors could be as easy as improving training relating to product knowledge or selling skills or offering sales messaging tools to help counter feelings of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. No matter the unique solution for each firm, sales enablement helps reduce burnout according to the results of this study.

### THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This research contributes to the sales literature in several manners. First, the study conceptualizes sales enablement as a job resource which can benefit impending research in the goal of reducing turnover intentions and increasing salesperson performance. Thus, the Job Demands-Resources Model has expanded to include a new variable in hopes of delineating costly sales turnover vis-à-vis burnout (Bakker and Demerouti 2017). Second, an approach for measuring sales enablement was offered, as no measurement mechanism exists for capturing the nuances of the multifaceted concept. It appears the variable consisting of enablement dimensions like marketing, training, sales ops, coaching, and enabling technology is robust for capturing the construct's foundations. Third, the literature is advanced by highlighting the role of sales enablement with salesforce turnover intentions and salesperson performance by introducing the mediating effect of burnout, which has not been noted in the literature to date.

This embryonic research into sales enablement and its potential buffering impact on hindrance stressors is not without its limitations. This study was constrained to a single cross-sectional sample taken from a business-to-business sales environment. The sales literature would benefit from a longitudinal investigation of the effects of stressors and burnout as those feelings are not configured in a person instantaneously, but build over time.

Additionally, the measure of sales force enablement in this research was self-reported by the salesperson and not validated within sales management. Further, perhaps high performers (not measured in this study) versus low performers would be affected differently.

The results clearly indicate that sales enablement can help reduce hindrance stressors, burnout, and turnover intentions while increasing salesperson performance. Hence, it appears that sales enablement could be considered a “panacea construct;” yet, currently we know very little about how this newly empowered approach to sales force support is formulated and executed. While sales enablement, in general, had a positive effect on the sales force, the effects of different levels of sales force enablement are currently unknown. The potential ramifications for practice are clear, yet must be tempered with generalizable challenges, since this study is one of the first attempts to operationalize and test the effects of the sales enablement concept. Obviously, many other variables exist that are not accounted for in this study (tenure in role, compensation, etc.).

### Directions for Future Research

This study provides a contribution to the existing understanding of applying the Job Demands-Resources Model within a sales unit, with specific emphasis regarding the potential need for companies to implement sales enablement initiatives when strong hindrance stressors are present. It is recognized that survey panel data could lead to sampling artifacts when considering scale validation, and path models could differ within various industries and within specific companies. Hence, it is recommended that future studies replicate the methods presented across industries to determine consistent pathways between these proposed constructs. Perceptions surrounding both sales enablement interventions and hindrance stressors may in fact differ based on current conceptualization and practices specific to an industry, competitive markets, companies, etc.

Second, this study’s sample consisted of surveying front-line salespeople only; marketing, sales support, and sales

management, who are also heavily involved with sales enablement, were not part of the sample. It would be compelling to test whether there is alignment between front-line salespeople and the sales leadership team on sales enablement, hindrance stressors, and levels of burnout within the firm. While logical, the stress associated with selling and closing business likely far exceeds the hindrance-related stress that corporate marketing, sales support, and even sales management experiences.

Third, it is conceivable that differences in perceptions could exist surrounding sales enablement and hindrance stressors based on individual variables such as respondent gender, age, tenure in sales, tenure working for the employer, type of salesperson (hunter versus farmer), or organizational variables, such as a strategic business unit, product or service type sold, territory assignment, account type (size, industry), etc. Moreover, previous conceptions of hindrance stressors predominately assessed internal tensions relating to the job itself. It might be more holistic to include external influences as well.

As a fourth consideration, a future study could explore the effects of sales enablement in combination with challenger stressors which actually serve as motivators. Finally, future research testing could entail sales enablement’s effects on other endogenous variables, such as job satisfaction, absenteeism, engagement, servant leadership, and organizational citizenship behaviors. There are obviously other exogenous and endogenous variables to consider, in combination with sales enablement as a job resource driving future research endeavors, to provide noteworthy insights and expand the current nomological net for the Job Demands-Resources Model in a sales context.

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#### APPENDIX Scale Items

##### Sales Enablement (Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$ )

1. At my company, the technology to support the salesforce significantly improves the productivity of our salespeople.
2. Our sales enablement technology (technology selling tools) is highly effective for enabling our organization to collaborate across departments.
3. My company provides sales enablement technology (technology selling tools) that allows me to access real-time customer information and provides dashboards and reports to track sales activities.
4. My company creates sales content that enhances my productivity (e.g., customer case studies, white papers, product demo decks, etc.).
5. My sales support team provides me with tailored "speaking points" that are specific to buyer roles and needs.

6. My company employs the use of social media, texting, emailing, and sending sales collateral that assist me in setting appointments with qualified prospects.
7. My company has laid out a step-by-step sales process model that I follow with customers.
8. Our organization collaborates across all departments to align with what customers need.
9. My sales support team provides me with proper data or metrics to assist in monitoring my performance (e.g., win-loss reports, close ratios, length of sales cycle, etc.).
10. My sales manager's coaching helps me to be more effective at my job.
11. My company offers valuable training as it relates to effective selling practices.
12. My company offers valuable training as it relates to product knowledge and customer solutions.

##### Hindrance Stressors (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$ )

1. The degree to which politics rather than performance affects organizational decisions.
2. The inability to clearly understand what is expected of me as a sales producer.
3. The amount of red tape I need to go through to make a sale with a customer.
4. The lack of job security I have as a sales producer with my company.
5. The degree to which my career seems to have stalled.

##### Turnover Intentions (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$ )

1. I will probably be looking for another sales job soon.
2. I often think about quitting.
3. I will quit this sales job sometime in the next year.
4. It would not take too much for me to resign from my sales position.

##### Performance (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$ )

1. I am a top performer.
2. My performance is in the top 10%.
3. I have been rated consistently as a star performer.
4. I consistently sell more products and services than others.