

Work-Family Conflict, Burnout and Value Co-creation: The Specific case of Salesperson

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Abstract

Value Co-creation in this paper is viewed as a joint process between the firm and the customer to create customer satisfaction and subsequently loyalty leading to competitive advantage in the market. If the process of creating value relies in personal interactions, salespeople, by definition, lead the interaction between the firm and its customers. However, the sales activity is currently under deep pressure due to the role's salesperson play in both the organization, where they work, and the active role in the family. This factor may affect personal relationship with customers and the way they address customer needs, affecting, as a consequence, the Value Co-Creation process. The aim of this study is to shed light on the individual salesperson's emotional states, regarding Work-Family Conflict and Burnout, in creating customer value co-creation.

Keywords: Value co-creation Salespeople; Work-Family Conflict; Burnout;

Track: Sales Management and Personal Selling

Introduction

The personal selling process is experiencing an undergoing change at various levels. These changes are empowered by alterations of diverse nature, instigating a shift in the way salespeople act and interact with customers, namely in what concerns customer relationship, understanding customer's needs, expectations, demandingness and, consequently, salespeople's individual performance. This shift is justified by increasingly competition levels, demanding customer expectations in an even more demassified marketplace, marked by new segments. In this way, salespeople evolve into relationship managers and human resource managers in order to bring together the ideal conditions to create a value proposition adjustable for each customer. Knowledge management has, therefore, evolved from Organizational based (Traditional sales and marketing theory) storage and dissemination into individual salesperson with the intention of outcome delivery (Le Meunier-FitzHugh, Baumann, Palmer, & Wilson, 2011).

Not only the sales role is becoming more challenging, as is also becoming widely accepted that stress "is part of the job" in what concerns the sales job (Shepherd, Tashchian, & Ridnour, 2011). Also, we are increasingly becoming more exposed to a 24/7 economy where the ideal worker is the one who arrives first, leaves last, and has no emotional strings outside the workplace (Hoobler, Hu, & Wilson, 2010). To this extent, salespeople are particularly susceptible to an increasing exposure to role conflicts and job stressors due to the boundary-spanning and stressful nature of sales positions (Bande, Jaramillo, Fernández-Ferrín, & Varela, 2019; Boles, Wood, & Johnson, 2003; Kemp, Borders, & Ricks, 2012). This may lead to burnout as a response to frequent and intense client interactions (Castanheira & Chambel, 2010).

The way individuals respond to several stressors, particularly under specific personal circumstances, and the impact it has on Performance remain a fertile ground for future research.

It is generally recognized, two dimensions in adulthood life which are Work and Family (Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian, 1996). Finding a way of balancing this tenuous and sensitive compatibility between these two dimensions has proven to be a difficult task in the current professional context.

In modern societies, to achieve individual success implies having a job with status, high ego gratification and increased self-esteem, nevertheless, these psychological benefits come with

a potential cost (Fields, 2002). These costs may very well defy the quality and the nature of relationships an individual has in both worlds of work and family and, when stressful events occur they may have a negative impact on its psychological well-being (Fields, 2002).

The literature is somewhat extensive in portraying the impact salespeople can exert through their behaviours in order to influence customer's willingness to participate in the value-creation process (Delpechitre, Beeler-Connelly, & Chaker, 2018). Therefore, a lot of attention has been given to the propitious conditions for the social exchange (i.e value creation) to occur and the role that salespeople play in that process (Delpechitre et al., 2018; Haas, Snehota, & Corsaro, 2012; Hohenschwert, 2012; Jaakkola, Frösén, Tikkanen, et al., 2015; Le Meunier-FitzHugh et al., 2011).

However, less attention has been given to the topic of salesperson's willingness in participating and engaging in the co-creation of value. Despite the lack of attention to the area, it is widely accepted that salesperson have the ability to regulate and control emotions, overcoming their personal emotional distresses and challenges, to adapt their own mood, and their customers, resulting into a reinforced and profound relationship (Kemp et al., 2012).

The literature is scarce in order to ascertain about the individual-level aspects that matter for the understanding of value creation individual process. This scarcity becomes more evident when we refer to the personal and environment drivers that influence both the ability to work and the ability to think first about customers and their specific needs.

Therefore, we consider relevant to learn more about the topic, not only, for the marketing research field, but also from a managerial perspective. It is essential to learn what drives salespeople willingness to cope with customers in order to create value for both managers and salespeople.

Literature Review

Work-Family Conflict

Work-family conflict topic, although not new, has gaining, throughout the years, increased attention in the Personal Sales field as it has been identified as one of the five emerging psycho-social risks in today's working environment (Bande et al., 2019). It will be, therefore, easily established that the repercussions of this type of occurrence will be of an individual nature, but also organizational insofar as it leads to important negative consequences for the organizations as well as may lead significant costs (Carballo-Penela, Varela, & Bande, 2018) and competitive loss.

Despite of the work-nonwork dynamic relationship had its scrutiny at the highest point about four decades ago, we consider that the topic is covered by timelessness and remains actual because the conflict between the work role and life role will be at the core of attention of individuals and organizations.

WFC is “a form of interrole conflict – opposing pressures - in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in some respect” (Byron, 2005; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Taylor, Huml, & Dixon, 2019), meaning that job expectations or responsibilities interfere or collide with family expectations or responsibilities (Darrat, Amyx, & Bennett, 2010; Tabassum, Farooq, & Fatima, 2017). That is to say that these two dimensions are to same extent opposite due to the participation of the same individual in these two dimensions.

It is unquestionable that WFC is an important factor when it comes to induce behavioural shifts of individuals, affecting individual’s wellbeing and health (Tabassum et al., 2017) and overall life quality (Warner & Hausdorf, 2009).

Despite of abundant, none of the studies have directly analysed WFC as a potential cause for obstruction or mitigation to the value co-creation process, due to the fact that individuals experiencing from WFC are unable to perform their duties (Hall, Dollard, Tuckey, Winefield, & Thompson, 2010). Although salesperson performance was sufficiently addressed (Hoobler et al., 2010; Netemeyer, Maxham, & Pullig, 2005; Warner & Hausdorf, 2009), value creation on the other hand, assumes an unequivocal importance because it’s coated by topicality and has been found to have a positive impact on organizations sustainable performance (Ismael & Emeagwali, 2019), salesperson performance (Terho, Eggert, Haas, & Ulaga, 2015) and Consumer Satisfaction, Loyalty and Trust (Garcia Haro, Martinez Ruiz, & Martinez Canas, 2014).

Burnout

Job burnout is a term created in the mid-70s, of psychic nature, becoming a widely used term for work-related stress and negative work-related outcomes. The term “Burnout Syndrome” has emerged and consequently accepted by scholars and society in general to define a stage of emotional exhaustion and cynicism that occurs frequently among working individuals (Shepherd et al., 2011).

Although the term has been approached by countless studies, of diverse scientific nature, all are convergent in stating that Burnout is a stress generated by work-related issues,

representing a consequence of chronic stress exposure resulting in an indication that the individual is no longer able to perform his job (Castanheira & Chambel, 2010), or a concept that encompasses almost any negative reaction to work-related stress (Shepherd et al., 2011), or even, an irreversible form of fatigue that requires medical treatment (Aniței, Chraif, & Ioniță, 2015).

Employees suffering from Burnout consider leaving the organization (Turnover Intentions), which makes the study of Burnout on the salesperson area a core concern of marketing scholars and managers (Babakus, Yavas, & Ashill, 2009; Lewin & Sager, 2007). While the literature on Burnout is vast on the organizational and occupational research field, there is still an extensive and wide avenue for research examining burnout in the marketing literature (Lewin & Sager, 2007).

The tasks required from salespeople, as boundary spanners, are highly susceptible to job stressors (Bande et al., 2019; Boles et al., 2003; Kemp et al., 2012; Lewin & Sager, 2007; Shepherd et al., 2011), and from the perception of the work related inconsistencies, salespeople tend to begin to feel emotional exhaustion (Lewin & Sager, 2008).

Throughout the literature review of burnout in the sales context, a gap in the literature emerges immediately. There is a clear distinction between the different roles of salespeople and their responsibilities (Services or field salespeople) and thus the results of previous studies cannot be generalized. Also, more studies are needed to address the subject properly, hence most of the studies conducted on Burnout and Job Performances rely on employees reports of performance which can generate bias (Castanheira & Chambel, 2010).

Regardless of its definition, individuals who are experiencing “burning out” are described as lacking empathy and creating negative relationships with their clients (Taylor et al., 2019), therefore if the quality of the relationship is depreciated by the emotional estate of the salesperson, we believe that the value exchange during personal interaction will also be jeopardized. Nevertheless, salespeople are able to regulate their own emotions in order to focus on their customers emotions, overcoming their emotional challenges, improving their own mood (Delpechitre et al., 2018).

Value Co-Creation

In the literature, the term value creation can be attributed when a customer is involved in the offering or formation process of a product/service. More specifically, when it is involved in the value formation process (Jaakkola, Frösén, & Tikkanen, 2015; Szarucki & Menet, 2018)

as a result of an interaction between customer and salesperson, who, in this case, represents the firm.

Although, both concepts are interrelated, without a thorough understanding of the interaction concept, the boundaries, the nature and/or content of value co-creation cannot be identified (Hohenschwert, 2012), and value co-creation easily becomes a concept without substance (Grönroos, 2011).

In this study, co-creation is perceived as the mutual value creation between the customer and the supplier and involves a joint effort of both parts in building rich experiences and to solve problems in a certain context.

It should be noted that the unique contribution of a service perspective on business (service logic) is not that customers are always co-creators of value, but rather that, under certain circumstances, the customer get the opportunity to co-create value together with its service providers (Grönroos, 2011). Therefore, creating value for the customer, in this service-dominant context depends, not only, on the acquisition of in-depth customer knowledge and the ability to adapt and customize resources to the customer's usage situation but also represents a new concept of sales as it shifts from deal closing to identifying opportunities for inserting value-added services into an ongoing relationship (Ulaga & Loveland, 2014).

Salespeople are crucial boundary spanner that greatly influence customer value co-creation behaviours. Moreover, it is believed that salespeople have the unique ability to perceive and understand the emotions affecting the customer value co-creation behaviours (Delpechitre et al., 2018). Existing literature, despite of its vastness, does not help to understand what salespeople do with different customers in order to create value, in different contexts or interactions. Not knowing about the individual-level aspects that matter for the customer means that, the understanding of value creation and value in business interactions is still limited (Hohenschwert, 2012). Therefore, from the theoretical perspective, it's relevant to learn more about the topic and, on the other hand, from a practical perspective it is crucial for the firms' success knowing how salespeople work in order to create customer value.

Notwithstanding, value co-creation has been widely examined in interorganisational or interdepartmental contexts and the personal interactions have been relegated to a non-nuclear and secondary position (Baumann & Le Meunier-FitzHugh, 2015). To add complexity to the theme, the concept of value is determined by the usage situation being valued by the beneficiary, meaning that throughout the exchanging process, the image of value is built under

the form of individual perception, making the value creation relationship specific and impossible to be determined by the characteristics of the relationship or its actors (Haas et al., 2012; Le Meunier-FitzHugh et al., 2011).

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