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Resource gain or resource pain? How managerial social support resources influence the impact of sales anxiety on burnout

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ABSTRACT

There is growing recognition that many salespeople frequently experience anxiety, which may impact salesperson mental health and well-being. Unfortunately, there is little empirical evidence on how to manage this situation. Using a longitudinal sample of 156 business-to-business salespeople, the present study examines the impact of sales anxiety on the key mental health outcome of burnout, alongside providing recommendations to sales managers on how to manage this impact. The results suggest that sales anxiety is positively related to each individual component of burnout, and that positive supervisor feedback plays a mitigating role in each of these relationships. By contrast, however, a social climate of autonomy can strengthen the impact of sales anxiety on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. The present study contributes to the developing literature on salesperson mental health, further advancing emerging evidence that autonomy can result in detrimental outcomes. Implications, limitations, and future research avenues are discussed.

1. Introduction

Workplace anxiety is increasingly common in the modern world (Farrell, 2023), and consequently, the issue of managing anxiety is of growing importance. Different incidents can trigger experiences of anxiety across different situations and life domains, with the business-to-business (B2B) sales setting appearing to be an archetypal context for promoting anxiety symptoms. Sales is a performance-focused profession, and boundary-spanning salespeople manage increasingly complex environments (Kraft, Maity, & Porter, 2019; Malin, 2023). At the same time, they face constant performance pressures (Ryari, Alavi, & Wieseke, 2021), are never able to switch off from work (McGowan, 2021), and deal with a variety of role stressors (Rangarajan, Badrinarayanan, Sharma, Singh, & Guda, 2022). As an acknowledgment of this, awareness and concern for salesperson anxiety has grown in recent years (Sales Health Alliance, 2020).

Anxiety can be viewed from both a trait and state perspective, however, the uniquely challenging characteristics and pressures of the sales role mean that state-like feelings of anxiety are commonplace in salespeople (Grimms, 2020). These feelings of state anxiety (simply sales anxiety, henceforth) can occur across a wide variety of sales activities, and are likely more malleable than generalized (anxiety) predispositions.

The literature demonstrates that sales anxiety can negatively impact multiple performance-related sales outcomes (e.g., Agnihotri, Vieira, Senra, & Gabler, 2016; Lussier, Philip, Hartmann, & Wieland, 2021), and thus is important from an organizational standpoint. Indeed, for salespeople, and in line with Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, anxiety can "represent a threat to well-being" (Byrne et al., 2014, p. 347), using up personal resources that could increase salesperson exhaustion. Moreover, anxiety promotes self-protection and avoidance behaviors (Verbeke & Bagozzi, 2000), and impacts salespeople's self-doubt and self-belief (Bandura, 2015; Lussier et al., 2021). Accordingly, anxiety has the potential to independently impact each individual burnout dimension, i.e., emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and a diminishing sense of personal accomplishment (Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Trougakos, Beal, Cheng, Hideg, & Zweig, 2015).

The impact of anxiety is likely to vary according to aspects of the

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sales role, and sales managers may play a part in this. Sales managers can help shape subordinates' mental health (Hartmann & Lussier, 2020), and in this regard, Lussier, Beeler, Bolander, and Hartmann (2023) argue that supervisory social resources need to be examined in more detail. Two important instruments in the sales manager's social support toolkit involve the provision of positive feedback and the promotion of an autonomy-supportive social climate (Kemp, Borders, & Ricks, 2013; Park & Jang, 2017). Both are seen as key elements of supervisory social support (Ellingsen-Dalskau, Morken, Berget, & Pedersen, 2016; Trépanier, Fernet, & Austin, 2013), and instrumental in determining the mental health and psychological outcomes of employees (Park & Jang, 2017; Parker & Knight, 2023; Van den Broeck, Vansteenkiste, De Witte, & Lens, 2008). Both are argued to form what are known within COR theory as caravan passageways, which "support, foster, enrich, and protect the resources of individuals" (Hobfoll, 2012, p. 229).

However, although positive feedback is regarded as a positive social resource, the effects of an autonomy-supportive climate may be dependent on a salesperson's need for autonomy (Matthews, Beeler, Zablah, & Hair, 2018). Regarding sales anxiety, more autonomous environments can increase the cognitive and physiological demands on salespeople. Ironically, for more anxious salespeople (since they are suboptimally functioning), such environments may offer insufficient guidance and support, and thus contribute to burnout.

The current study, therefore, explores the relationships between sales anxiety and salesperson burnout, and examines the potential roles that two facets of sales manager social support may play in those relationships. In so doing, the research yields two key contributions. First, in focusing on burnout, this research directly examines the potential mental health consequences of salesperson anxiety. Second, in positive feedback and a social climate of autonomy, the research explores controllable managerial mechanisms to better understand how to shape anxiety's impact on salesperson burnout.

Using a longitudinal survey design and data from a sample of 156 B2B salespeople, the study examines the relationships between anxiety and burnout under different levels of positive feedback and autonomy-supportive climates. Results show that sales anxiety is positively related to the individual components of burnout. In respect of moderating relationships, as sales managers provide greater positive feedback, the positive relationship between anxiety and the burnout components weakens; but, the more autonomy-supportive the climate, the *greater* the relationship between sales anxiety and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (but not diminishing personal accomplishment). The present study's findings further shed light on the premise that sales managers can design sales jobs and sales manager-salesperson interactions for the purpose of improving the mental health of subordinates. The next section presents the study's theoretical background, with the conceptual framework and associated hypotheses then outlined, followed by presentations and discussions of the methodology, results, and implications.

2. Theoretical background and conceptual model

2.1. Sales anxiety

Anxiety research in sales initially gained traction with the seminal paper of Verbeke and Bagozzi (2000) which examined the impact of sales call anxiety (i.e., a specific form of state anxiety) on salesperson performance. However, limited sales literature directly examines anxiety, with there being great variation in the state forms of anxiety investigated. Table 1 provides an overview of the different forms of anxiety studied within sales research, alongside the antecedents to, and consequences of, the anxieties examined.

Anxiety can be viewed from a trait or state perspective, with trait anxiety viewed as a stable and generalized predisposition in which a person experiences anxiety across all situations, and state anxiety as a situationally dependent emotion (Endler & Kocovski, 2001). Although trait anxiety can no doubt lead to detrimental outcomes for salespeople (Cook, 2022), state anxieties faced within the sales role are a function of the sales role, and may be easier for sales managers to influence when compared to trait anxiety (Sager & Wilson, 1995). Indeed, Table 1 demonstrates that research examining specific forms of state anxiety is dominant in sales literature. Although these situational-specific measures can provide nuanced detail on the potential causes and impact of anxieties in different sales activities, understanding the general presence of sales anxiety symptoms helps to provide an initial investigation into sales anxiety's overall impact on salespeople.

Table 1 also highlights that many antecedents are identified as precursors to specific forms of state anxiety, including role stressors (Fry, Futrell, Parasuraman, & Chmielewski, 1986; Rangarajan et al., 2022), job insecurity (Rangarajan et al., 2022), stereotype threat (Amin, Arndt, & Tanner, 2023), interactions with angry clients (Park & Kim, 2021), task difficulty (Dubinsky, Kim, & Lee, 2011), and coping strategy (Boyd, Lewin, & Sager, 2009). It is also evident in Table 1 that, while the literature predominantly focuses on anxiety's performance-related outcomes (e.g., Agnihotri et al., 2016; Lussier et al., 2021), research is yet to fully explicate its mental health consequences. This is especially important considering that anxiety impacts resource depletion (Cheng & McCarthy, 2018). Of particular interest in this regard is the broader extent to which salespeople experience anxiety symptoms in their sales role, and how this contributes to subsequent burnout symptoms.

2.2. Salesperson burnout

Burnout is a popular topic of study in sales literature, and it consists of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of diminished personal accomplishment. Emotional exhaustion is characterized by a complete loss of resources, depersonalization is characterized as a dysfunctional coping mechanism in which an individual detaches themselves from others and their role, and diminished personal accomplishment refers to feelings of unhappiness and a lack of achievement (Ambrose, Rutherford, Shepherd, & Tashchian, 2014; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Existing literature examines many antecedents and consequences of burnout, with sales literature typically focusing on how different demands and stressors impact burnout (Ambrose et al., 2014; Lewin & Sager, 2009; Peasley, Hochstein, Britton, Srivastava, & Stewart, 2020; Rutherford, Shepherd, & Tashchian, 2015), while also seeking to understand how to mitigate the impact of burnout drivers (e.g. McFarland & Dixon, 2021; McFarland, Rode, & Shervani, 2016).

Burnout is described as a state of resource depletion (Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993), and is closely aligned with both job demands-resource theory (JD-R) and COR theory (See Peasley et al., 2020). While JD-R focuses on how demands (such as role stressors) can increase burnout, with resources mitigating this impact (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001), COR suggests that environmental stress results in the loss of resources, leading to a resultant attempt to protect and replenish them (Hobfoll, 1989). Although existing literature alludes to associations between anxiety and burnout (e.g., Lyngdoh, Chefor, Hochstein, Britton, & Amyx, 2021; Winstanley & Whittington, 2002), a direct examination of the relationships between anxiety symptoms (e.g., apprehension, worry, nervousness) and mental health outcomes, such as burnout, appear to have been overlooked.

2.3. Anxiety and burnout

Fig. 1 presents the conceptual model for the present study. The relationship between anxiety and burnout is not clear-cut, yet a recent meta-analysis finds that anxiety and burnout are distinctly separate constructs (Koutsimani, Montgomery, & Georganta, 2019). In addition, some authors present burnout as an antecedent to anxiety (e.g., Bakker & de Vries, 2021; Shirom & Ezrachi, 2003), whereas others have presented anxiety as an antecedent to burnout (e.g., Maslach & Leiter, 1997; Richardsen, Burke, & Leiter, 1992).

Table 1
Overview of sales anxiety literature.

Authors	Year	Form of anxiety	Antecedents	Consequences	Other important findings
Amin et al.	2023	Sales	Stereotype threat (+) Help-Focused coping (−)		
Rangarajan et al.	2022	Work from home	Work overload (+) Job insecurity (+) Role Ambiguity (+)	Affective commitment (−) Normative commitment (−)	Perceived usefulness positively moderates the relationship between anxiety and affective and normative commitment to work from home. Technical support positively moderates the relationship between anxiety and normative commitment to work from home
Park & Kim	2021	Not specified	Interacting with angry clients (+)		Job satisfaction negatively moderated the relationship between interacting with angry clients and anxiety. Experiencing clients' adverse behaviors mediated the relationship between interacting with angry clients on anxiety. Age, gender, and education level not related to anxiety.
Lussier et al.	2021a	Social	Mindful acceptance (−) Perceived sales manager support (−)	Salesperson Performance (−)	Mindful acceptance and sales manager feedback negatively moderated the positive relationship between social anxiety and salesperson performance.
Verbeke et al.	2016	Sales presentation (via cortisol levels)			Cortisol levels increased during sales presentation, before subsequently decreasing 20–50 min after. Negative correlation found between self-reported experience of stress and cortisol levels
Agnihotri et al.	2016	Attachment		Salesperson performance (−) Interpersonal Mentalizing skills (−)	
Dubinsky et al.	2011	Performance	Task difficulty (+)		Palpability not related to anxiety, which is not related to interpersonal sensitivity.
Boyd et al.	2009	Job	Emotional-Focused coping (+)	Job Satisfaction (−) Intention to leave (+)	
Dietvorst et al.	2009	Social	Rapport building (−)	Salesperson Performance (−)	
Belschak et al.	2006	Sales call		Protective actions (+)	Sale perseverance positively moderates the anxiety cognitions and physiological sensations-protective actions relationships. Task concentration negatively moderates the physiological sensations-protective actions relationship, but positively moderates the anxiety-protective actions relationship.
Verbeke & Bagozzi	2000	Sales call	Dealing with high-status customers (+) Meeting new people (+) Being Assertive (+) Asking for commitment (+) Discussing performance with sales manager (+) Negative Affect (+)	Communication Performance (−) Volume Performance (−)	
Fry et al.	1986	Job	Role conflict (+)		

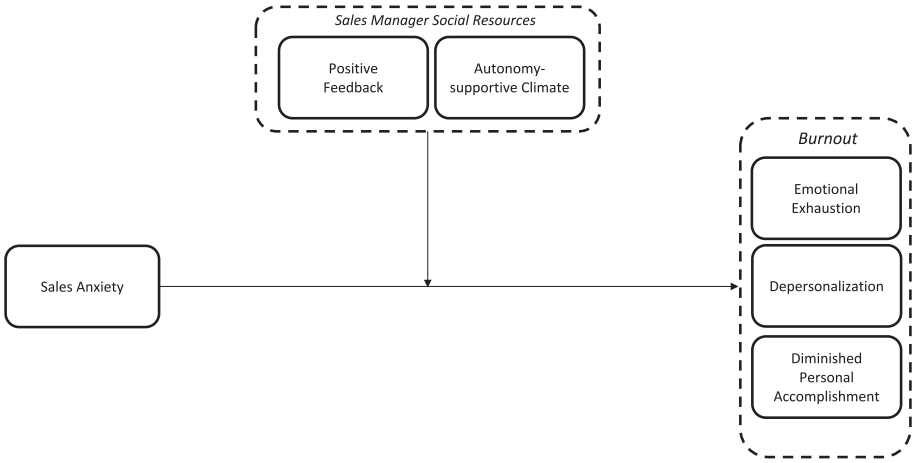

Fig. 1. Overview of conceptual model.

Despite the lack of agreement in extant literature, it is unequivocal that anxiety evokes a range of detrimental physiological and cognitive responses. Anxiety not only impairs an individual's cognitive ability (McKnight, Monfort, Kashdan, Blalock, & Calton, 2016), influencing their ability to work effectively and to learn new skills or abilities (Hartmann & Lussier, 2020), it can also increase physiological symptoms, including hyperarousal, increased blood pressure and heart rate (Constantin, Powell, & McCarthy, 2021; Weems, Zakem, Costa, Cannon, & Watts, 2005), and reduce sleep quality (Dehghan, Azmoon, Souri, & Akbari, 2014).

There is no hiding for B2B salespeople, even when they are anxious. Hitting quota is now an "hourly, daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly goal for (B2B) salespeople" (Boichuk et al., 2014, p. 95), and compounding this, salespeople frequently experience failure and rejection (Kahle, 2021; McGowan, 2021; Verbeke & Bagozzi, 2000). This can quickly lead to resource depletion, with the increased personal demands resulting from anxiety further draining a salesperson's resources (Amin et al., 2023; Devotto & Wechsler, 2019). Furthermore, anxious salespeople use up resources more quickly than they can be replenished (Freedy & Hobfoll, 1994), leading to even greater emotional exhaustion (McCarthy, Trougakos, & Cheng, 2016). Accordingly,

H1a. Sales anxiety is positively related to subsequent emotional exhaustion in salespeople.

When salespeople are losing resources they may engage in protective actions in a bid to conserve their resources (Verbeke & Bagozzi, 2000). Anxious people may try to avoid situations that promote anxious feelings, preferring to withdraw from engaging in their sales activities (i.e., to depersonalize). This might be due to fear of ridicule and rejection from coworkers (Verbeke & Bagozzi, 2000) and/or feelings of uneasiness (Belschak, Verbeke, & Bagozzi, 2006). Anxiety promotes self-protection and avoidance behaviors (Verbeke & Bagozzi, 2000), and as resources deplete, indifferent responses to work can occur (Hobfoll, Tirone, Holmgreen, & Gerhart, 2016), with ongoing interactions, negotiations, and frequent failure experiences combining to increase anxiety. This, in turn, results in greater depersonalization (De Clercq, Haq, & Azeem, 2020; Lee & Gong, 2024), and so,

H1b. Sales anxiety is positively related to subsequent depersonalization in salespeople.

Finally, anxiety can result in salespeople experiencing a reduction in their self-belief and self-efficacy (Bandura, 2015; Verbeke & Bagozzi, 2000), alongside an increase in self-doubt (Lussier et al., 2021). Thus, anxiety can reduce key personal resources related to accomplishment (Feldman, Davidson, & Margalit, 2015), and when reflecting on their increased anxiety levels, salespeople can experience a reduced ability to competently analyze sales situations (Agnihotri et al., 2016). As such, feelings of anxiety can significantly impact feelings of personal accomplishment (Slivar, 2001). Thus,

H1c. Sales anxiety is positively related to subsequent feelings of diminishing personal accomplishment in salespeople.

2.4. The buffering role of sales manager social support

COR is based upon the interaction of an individual with their environment (Peasley et al., 2020), with internal or external resources available to individuals (Nguyen, Paswan, & Dubinsky, 2018). When individuals are anxious, and experiencing greater resource loss, they may look for support to help them (Beehr & McGrath, 1992). While sales organizations have many steering instruments that they can wield to influence salespeople's motivations and behaviors, for example, bonuses and performance reviews (e.g., Homburg, Hohenberg, & Hahn, 2019), when an individual is depleted of their personal (internal) resources, they can turn to their (external) environment for help (Lapointe & Vandenberghe, 2018). Features of the workplace environment can help influence resource loss and/or promote resource gain (Chen, Westman, & Hobfoll, 2015). In the workplace environment, one key form of resource that sales managers can provide is social support (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014). Social support resources are usually deemed vital for salespeople (Tuan, 2022) and are viewed as instruments that can help replenish diminished resources (Halbesleben, 2006).

2.4.1. Sales manager feedback

Within a sales force, the sales manager is a key individual who may offer support (Murphy & Li, 2012), often via feedback. Although differences in feedback (e.g., valence/quality) can result in varying outcomes, its effect will ultimately depend on how a salesperson perceives the feedback they receive. Feedback in the sales role is largely concerned with performance, and research suggests that positive feedback results in more positive outcomes (Belschak & Den Hartog, 2009). Subordinates feel greater energy levels after positive supervisor interactions (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009), and thus, these positive interactions appear likely to promote resource gain. In addition, when feedback is framed around positive behaviors or attitudes, it can help to reassure salespeople that they have the support of their manager. This can help reduce resource loss in response to a stressor (Lewin & Sager, 2008).

Accordingly, positive feedback can be seen as a social support-based resource boost, transferring energy from a manager to a salesperson, helping them to convey greater psychological resourcefulness (Owens, Baker, Sumpter, & Cameron, 2016). Feedback in the sales role is a form of instrumental social support (Lewin & Sager, 2008), and when

salespeople experience greater levels of positive feedback in their sales role, this can help to mitigate resource loss, and build new resources. Therefore,

H2a. Perceived sales manager positive feedback negatively moderates the positive relationship between sales anxiety and subsequent emotional exhaustion.

In addition, positive feedback can also help people to feel more positive about their role, leading salespeople to become more involved (Srivastava & Rangarajan, 2008). Feedback can trigger an employee to become more interested in their work (Joo & Park, 2010), and promote a more solution-based coping strategy alternative to depersonalizing (Lewin & Sager, 2008). Positive feedback can help to energize a salesperson, helping them to regain resources in response to resource loss (Hakanen, Perhoniemi, & Toppinen-Tanner, 2008). Thus, positive feedback helps salespeople to continue to engage with their job to a greater extent, since they have greater resources to invest in relationships and sales activities. Accordingly,

H2b. Perceived sales manager positive feedback negatively moderates the positive relationship between sales anxiety and subsequent depersonalization.

Finally, positive feedback can help to create a positive environment, as well as develop confidence and trust among salespeople (Kemp et al., 2013). The reassuring and reinforcing nature of positive feedback should provide confidence to salespeople, helping them to feel more positive about themselves and their actions within their sales role (Zellars, Hochwarter, Perrewe, Hoffman, & Ford, 2004). Salespeople can experience greater feelings of expertise and satisfaction in response to feedback (Shin, Hur, & Moon, 2023), and feedback can also help salespeople improve their self-image (Jaworski & Kohli, 1991). All of the above builds a salesperson's personal resources, helping them to better manage resource loss, and so,

H2c. Perceived sales manager positive feedback negatively moderates the positive relationship between sales anxiety and subsequent feelings of diminishing personal accomplishment.

2.4.2. Autonomy-supportive environment

Managers also have other social resources at their command, and one of the most important relates to their ability (or otherwise) to satiate employees' need for autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The need for autonomy is one of three basic needs, and its satiation is argued to assist an individual to achieve "higher levels of well-being" (Halbesleben et al., 2014, p. 1341). Baard, Deci, and Ryan (2004, p. 2048) describe an autonomy-supportive environment as "an interpersonal climate created by the manager in relating to subordinates and carrying out managerial functions, such as goal setting, decision making, and work planning".

As a sales manager enhances a social climate of autonomy, salespeople can draw upon this autonomy as an energizing or constructive resource, satiating their need for autonomy, and enabling them to "achieve" and "conserve" their own personal resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014). Thus, autonomy is typically viewed in a positive light, providing employees with the ability to buffer the impact of job demands on burnout (Fernet, Austin, Trépanier, & Dussault, 2013), alongside allowing flexibility in the way that salespeople can tackle role stressors (Hoppner, Mills, & Griffith, 2021). Importantly, individual perceptions of autonomy may differ, and thus, the extent to which a salesperson perceives autonomy will reflect their individual belief towards the existence of an autonomy-supportive climate.

Yet, despite the potential upsides of the provision of autonomy to salespeople, we suggest that downsides can occur, particularly where salespeople are experiencing depletions of other resources. The differential exposure hypothesis, for instance, suggests that an individual's level of resources alters their perception of their work environment, with those suffering from depleted resources (i.e., salespeople with greater anxiety) perceiving their environment to be more threatening, and so perceiving themselves to be less able to manage threats (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995).

Autonomy comes with responsibilities and stressors, such as the need to prioritize customers (Homburg, Droll, & Totzek, 2008), and even to terminate relationships when they are not profitable (Matthews et al., 2018). Because of this, the decisions salespeople need to engage in under high levels of autonomy may require extra cognitive and mental effort on their behalf, resulting over time in even *greater* resource drain (McCarthy et al., 2016). Thus, while an autonomy-supportive climate may in many contexts be expected to help reduce emotional exhaustion (e.g., Hoppner et al., 2021; Matthews et al., 2018), when individuals are highly anxious, a tension arises, since the resource the salesperson receives (autonomy) brings with it significant sales job demands in the form of responsibilities (Matthews et al., 2018). Accordingly, an autonomy-supportive climate could increase the negative impact of resource loss on emotional exhaustion, and thus,

H3a. An autonomy-supportive climate positively moderates the positive relationship between sales anxiety and subsequent emotional exhaustion.

Furthermore, since anxious salespeople's resources are depleting, greater protective actions may occur to conserve resources (Belschak et al., 2006). This may cause salespeople to withdraw from their sales role to a greater extent (De Clercq et al., 2020), since they require greater guidance when functioning sub-optimally. Sales roles which offer higher levels of autonomy provide less structure, guidance, and managerial direction (Friend, Ranjan, & Johnson, 2019), and in situations where more anxious salespeople are operating in more autonomy-supportive environments, they may experience extra cognitive load, thereby promoting protection behaviors (e.g., withdrawal and avoidance) to avoid greater resource loss. Thus,

H3b. An autonomy-supportive climate positively moderates the positive relationship between sales anxiety and subsequent depersonalization.

On the other hand, when salespeople are provided with autonomy, it demonstrates their managers' faith in their ability, helping them to perceive greater feelings of achievement in their role (Rapp, Agnihotri, Baker, & Andzulis, 2015). Thus, although a salesperson's resources may be depleting as a result of anxiety, autonomy can be seen as a 'vote of confidence' resource, enhancing a salesperson's self-belief. The latter can enhance the salesperson's personal feelings of worth and belongingness in their sales role. In this way, and despite reducing other internal resources, autonomy can enhance other resources (e.g., in the form of self-efficacy), fostering a greater sense of accomplishment. Accordingly,

H3c. An autonomy-supportive climate negatively moderates the positive relationship between sales anxiety and subsequent feelings of diminishing personal accomplishment.

3. Methodology

3.1. Participants and procedure

The data was collected using a US-based online panel data company. Of the 375 B2B salespeople who filled out the initial survey, 156 completed both waves, yielding an effective response rate of 41.6%, similar to previous longitudinal studies (e.g., Bolander, Satornino, Allen, Hochstein, & Dugan, 2020; Fu, Richards, Hughes, & Jones, 2010). The decision to target a two-wave sample of approximately 150 salespeople was made a priori and based on existing longitudinal sales studies (e.g., Dugan, Rouziou, & Bolander, 2020; Jones, Sundaram, & Chin, 2002).

All independent variables were collected at wave one, with the dependent variable (burnout) collected at wave two, one month later.

Table 2
Sample demographics.

Demographic	%	Frequency
Age		
18–25	3.8%	6
26–35	23.1%	36
36–45	28.2%	44
46–55	17.3%	27
56+	27.6%	43
Gender		
Male	64.7%	101
Female	35.3%	55
Duration in sales role		
>5 years	37.2%	58
5–9 years	26.3%	41
10–14 years	17.3%	27
15+ years	19.2%	30
Industry		
Technological	10.9%	17
Utilities	9.6%	15
Construction	8.3%	13
Manufacturing	8.3%	13
Transportation and Warehousing	6.4%	10
Finance and Insurance	5.1%	8
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	6.4%	10
Health Care	6.4%	10
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	1.9%	3
Accommodation and Food Services	9.0%	14
Other	26.3%	43

Justification for temporal separation was three-fold. First, it helps to alleviate common-method bias concerns (Hulland, Baumgartner, & Smith, 2018). Second, temporal separation is consistent with causal logic (Galkina, Atkova, & Yang, 2022), and third, it helps to address the possibility of reverse causation (Wunsch, Russo, & Mouchart, 2010). A time lag of one month was chosen since, a) initial within-person evidence suggests that burnout has the potential to change monthly (Martinent, Louvet, & Decret, 2016), and b) salespeople experience frequent stressors, customer interactions, and failure (Friend et al., 2019; Hall, Ahearne, & Sujan, 2015), suggesting that anxiety is likely to be experienced regularly, thus impacting burnout symptoms relatively quickly. Perhaps because of this, Mäkikangas et al. (2021, p. 728) propose that burnout research can benefit from examining burnout using "shortitudinal" research, as we do here.

Participants were provided with an initial summary of the study requirements at time one, alongside a confidentiality statement. To ensure data quality, the data was checked for 'speeders', and surveys were examined for 'straight-lining'; with any offending data eliminated from further analysis (Johnson, 2016).

Table 2 presents the demographic data of the sample. Participants were predominantly male (64.7%), with salespeople averaging 9 years in their current role and balanced across industries and ages. The sample is consistent with recent research examining the sales force (e.g., Ahmad, Liu, Akhtar, & Siddiqi, 2022; Carlson & Ross Jr, 2022).

3.2. Measures

All constructs were measured by well-established self-report scales, with specific items adapted to fit the context where necessary. Appendix A presents a full overview of the measures used. Unless otherwise stated, 7-point Likert scales (strongly disagree to strongly agree) were used. Rutherford, Hamwi, Friend, and Hartmann's (2011) 10-item reduced MBI scale was used to measure burnout. *Emotional exhaustion* (CR[1] = .95) was measured using four items on a 0–100 sliding scale, with '0' representing no exhaustion and '100' signifying complete exhaustion. 3-item measures were used for both *Diminished personal accomplishment* (CR = .77) *and Depersonalization* (CR = .89).

Sales anxiety (CR = .92) was also measured using a 3-item scale adapted from Watson et al. (1995). The presence of a social climate of autonomy was assessed by asking salespeople their perception of the extent to which they have *job autonomy* (CR = .90) (Wang & Netemyer, 2002). *Positive feedback* (CR = .95) was also measured using 3 items adapted from George and Zhou (2001), using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (all of the time).

Multiple control variables were included. Since active coping is an alternate coping mechanism potentially influencing burnout (Lewin & Sager, 2009), *active coping* (CR = .85) was included as a control, measured using a 5-item, 9-point Likert scale (very strongly disagree to very strongly agree) adapted from Lewin and Sager (2009). In addition, salesperson age, industry, and duration in the sales role, were also included as controls.

Since the current study utilizes single-source data, several a priori methods were employed to alleviate common method bias concerns (Hulland et al., 2018). Most importantly, the three burnout dimensions were separated temporally from all other variables, which were measured one month prior. In addition, scales were operationalized using different anchors and methods. For example, the emotional exhaustion measure used a sliding scale response form, whereas the depersonalization and diminished personal accomplishment measures used 7-point Likert scales, with the latter reverse-coded.

Post-hoc, the marker variable approach was also used to determine the presence of common method bias (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). The temporal separation between burnout and the other constructs worked to 'design out' typical single-source common method concerns (Hulland et al., 2018). However, sales anxiety and the moderators were measured at the same time period, and as such, common method may be a concern for these measures. The marker item used a 7-point Likert scale asking the salesperson the extent to which they agree that their sales performance rests on chance (Chung & Ding, 2002). The marker item demonstrates no significant correlations with the other variables included in the study, with the relationships inflated by no more than a magnitude of 0.0001 (Lindell & Whitney, 2001). Accordingly, common method bias does not appear to be a substantive concern here.

4. Results

Table 3 outlines the descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations among the measures used.

All hypotheses were tested simultaneously using a structural equation model, and a full overview of the results is provided in Fig. 2. The model demonstrates adequate fit, with the CFI, NNFI, and IFI all above 0.90, while the RMSEA and SRMR are below 0.08 (Marsh, Hau, & Wen, 2004; Newsom, 2015). Hypotheses tests were carried out using maximum likelihood estimation.

Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c argue that, at higher levels of sales anxiety, subsequent levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment would all be greater, and the results align with these logics, as shown in Table 4. Here, we see the unstandardized path estimates (γs) for the main effects of sales anxiety on emotional exhaustion ($\gamma = 12.98$, $t = 4.41$, $p \leq 0.05$), depersonalization ($\gamma = 0.80$, $t = 5.99$, $p \leq 0.05$), and diminished personal accomplishment ($\gamma = 0.19$, $t = 2.22$, $p \leq 0.05$) are all positive and significant.

Accordingly, these findings indicate that, if positive feedback and a social climate of autonomy (our moderators) were to take values of zero, sales anxiety would be positively related to each individual element of burnout. However, psychological variables (such as positive feedback and social climate of autonomy) are never absolutely zero in practice, and so using the results in Table 4 we calculate the slopes of sales anxiety on emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment when positive feedback and autonomy take on their mean levels (sample means of 4.99 and 5.77, respectively). As can be seen in Fig. 3, under the latter conditions, while sales anxiety remains a

[1] CR = Composite Reliability

Table 3
Correlation matrix.

Variable	Mean	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Anxiety	3.24	1.63	1							
2. Autonomy	5.77	1.00	−0.28	1						
3. Positive Feedback	4.99	1.30	−0.07	0.35	1					
4. Emotional Exhaustion	53.14	29.02	0.44	−0.25	−0.06	1				
5. Diminished Personal Accomplishment	2.61	1.12	0.17	−0.36	−0.30	0.11	1			
6. Depersonalization	3.03	1.68	0.52	−0.06	0.02	0.45	0.18	1		
7. Active Coping	7.18	1.14	−0.21	0.52	0.34	−0.03	−0.49	−0.04	1	
8. Age	4.42	1.22	−0.28	0.28	−0.05	−0.17	−0.08	−0.16	0.20	1
9. Experience	9.31	8.89	−0.09	0.13	0.02	−0.14	0.03	−0.07	0.06	0.46

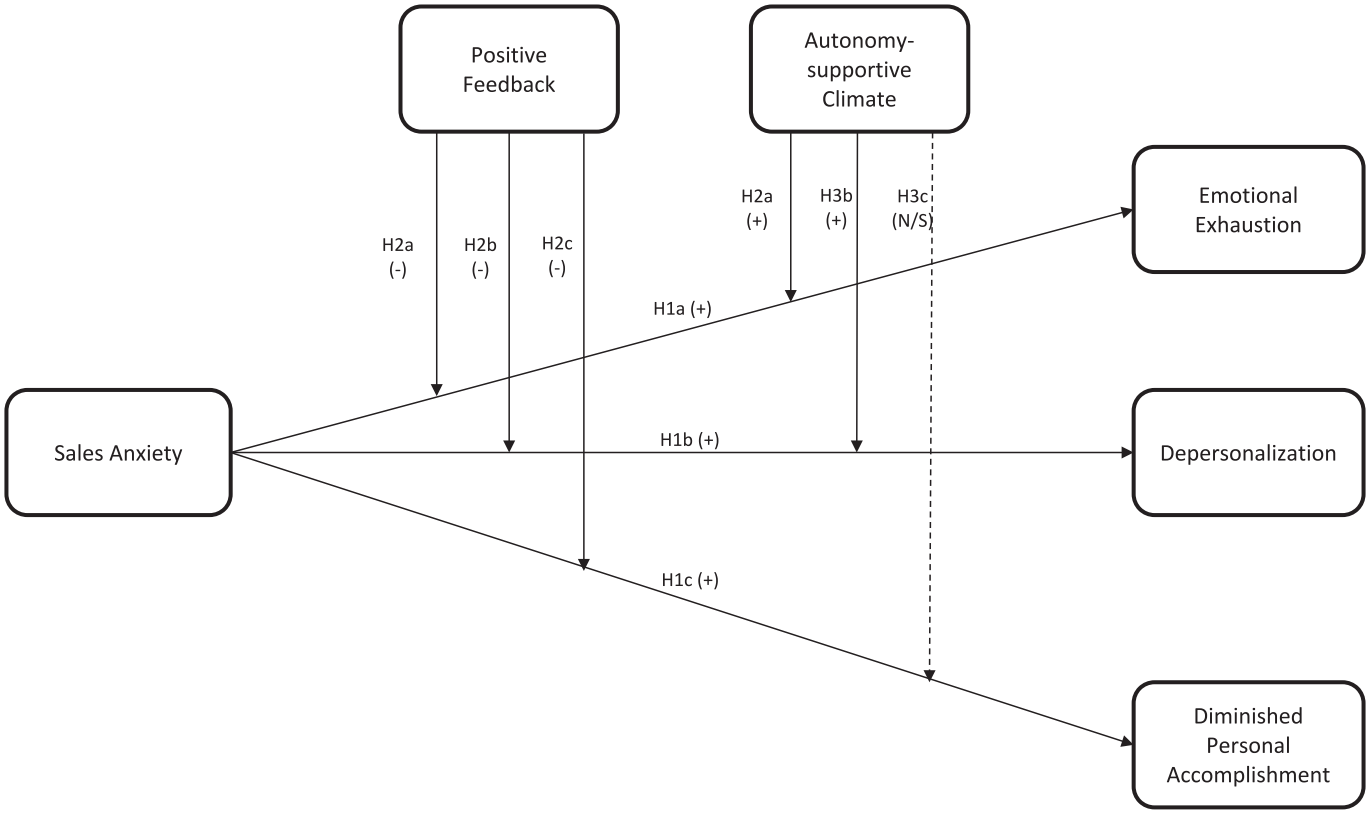

Fig. 2. Overview of model results.

positive driver of emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, it no longer positively relates to diminished personal accomplishment. Rather, higher levels of sales anxiety are associated with subsequent *lower* levels of diminished personal accomplishment. The latter findings are to be expected given that we also find significant moderation effects (see results for H2 and H3), and that support for H1a, H1b, and H1c is conditional on the level of feedback and/or social climate of autonomy experienced.

Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c propose that positive feedback reduces the positive relationship between sales anxiety and burnout, and Table 4 shows support for these hypotheses. Specifically, one-tailed (5%) significant negative path estimates are returned for the product of sales anxiety and positive feedback (anxiety x feedback) on emotional exhaustion ($\gamma = -27.43$, $t = -1.98$, $p \leq 0.05$), diminished personal accomplishment ($\gamma = -0.81$, $t = -2.01$, $p \leq 0.05$) and depersonalization ($\gamma = -0.97$, $t = -1.81$, $p \leq 0.10$). We plot these relationships in Fig. 4a, b, and c, respectively. Here, it can be seen that under higher levels of positive feedback, the relationships between sales anxiety and emotional exhaustion and anxiety and depersonalization become less positive, and the relationship between anxiety and diminished personal accomplishment becomes more negative.

Finally, hypotheses 3a, 3b, and 3c argue that a social climate of autonomy increases the positive relationship between sales anxiety and burnout, and Table 4 shows support for some of these hypotheses. That is, in support of H3a and H3b, the path coefficients for the product of anxiety and autonomy (sales anxiety x autonomy) on emotional exhaustion ($\gamma = 20.68$, $t = 2.18$, $p \leq 0.05$) and depersonalization ($\gamma = 0.82$, $t = 2.21$, $p \leq 0.05$) are positive and significant (1-tailed, 5%).

However, the path from sales anxiety x autonomy to diminished personal accomplishment is positive, but not significant (1-tailed, 5%), failing to support H3c ($\gamma = 0.31$, $t = 1.61$, $p = .07$). Accordingly, we plot only the relationships between sales anxiety and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization (under average levels of feedback) in Fig. 4d and e, respectively. Here, it can be seen that under higher levels of a social climate of autonomy, the relationships between sales anxiety and emotional exhaustion and anxiety and depersonalization become more positive.

Table 4
Path estimates for model assessment.

		Emotional Exhaustion		Depersonalization		Diminished Personal Accomplishment	
		γ	t-value	γ	t-value	γ	t-value
H1a	Anxiety ➔ Emotional Exhaustion	12.98	4.41				
H1b	Anxiety ➔ Depersonalization			0.80	5.99		
H1c	Anxiety ➔ Diminished PA					0.19	2.22
H2a	Anxiety x Feedback ➔ Emotional Exhaustion	−27.43	−1.98				
H2b	Anxiety x Feedback ➔ Depersonalization			−0.97	*−1.81**		
H2c	Anxiety x Feedback ➔ Diminished PA					−0.81	−2.01
H3a	Anxiety x Autonomy ➔ Emotional Exhaustion	20.68	2.18				
H3b	Anxiety x Autonomy ➔ Depersonalization			0.82	2.21		
H3c	Anxiety x Autonomy ➔ Diminished PA					0.44	1.61
Controls							
	Feedback	0.98	0.33	0.12	0.93	−0.03	−0.32
	Autonomy	*−8.17*	*−1.76**	0.08	0.42	−0.05	−0.33
	Active Coping	9.04	2.18	0.11	0.66	−0.43	−3.28
	Age	9.79	1.25	0.38	1.18	0.35	1.41
	Experience	−0.95	−1.49	−0.02	−0.89	−0.02	−0.87
	Industry	−0.01	−0.13	0.02	0.52	0.01	0.37
	Squared Multiple Correlation (R-square)	0.472		0.538		0.533	

$\chi^2 = 538.53$; df = 319; RMSEA = 0.067; SRMR = 0.057; CFI = 0.935; NNFI = 0.917; IFI = 0.936. Critical t-value: (2.5%, one-tailed) = +1.96 to test hypothesized positive paths, and − 1.96 to test hypothesized negative paths.
γ: unstandardized path estimates.
* Critical t-value (5%, one-tailed) = +1.645 to test hypothesized positive paths, and − 1.645 to test hypothesized negative paths.

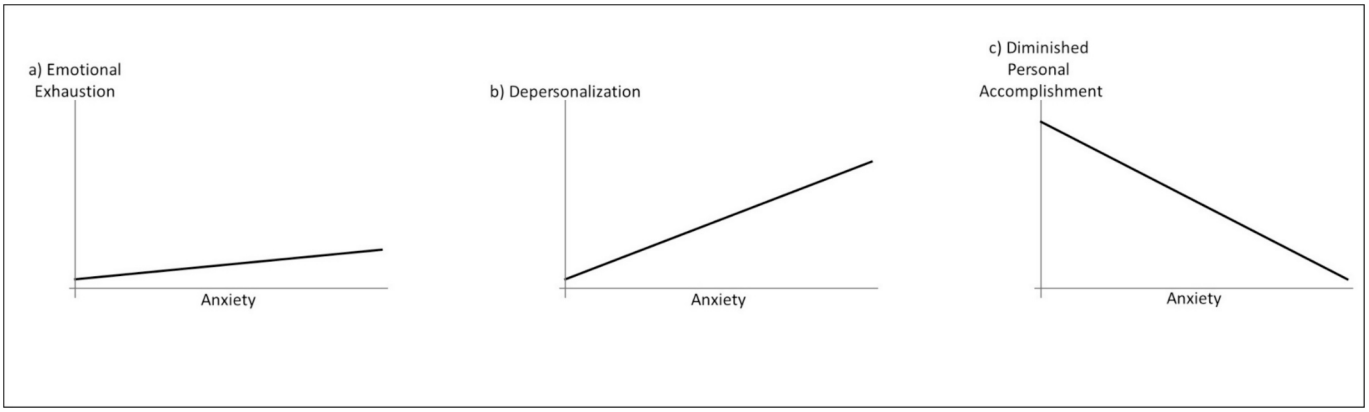

Fig. 3. Plots for effect of anxiety under average levels of positive feedback and autonomy.

5. Discussion

Anxiety and burnout are prevalent in salespeople and require careful management. The present study contributes to the literature on sales anxiety and salesperson well-being by demonstrating how sales anxiety might contribute to salesperson burnout, alongside detailing the mitigating role that the managerially controllable factors of positive feedback and social climate of autonomy could play. In summary, sales anxiety can lead to resource loss, and although feelings of anxiety might have benefits in fueling drive and motivating behavior (Aarons-Mele, 2023), this does not alter its negative implications on mental well-being.

Patently, it is normal for salespeople to feel some level of anxiety at times (c.f., Lavery, 2022), but when anxiety is not addressed and/or supported, there is scope for it to induce a deleterious spiral of resource loss. Our findings support the notion that sales anxiety can result in substantial suffering and cognitive impairment (Yasin & Dzlkifli, 2009), causing increasingly strong feelings of distress and threatening an individual's overall well-being (Akkawanitcha, Patterson, Buranapin, & Kantabutra, 2015). The present research exemplifies this need for attention to be given to managing salespeople's feelings of anxiety.

Our results also add credence to the notion that sales manager actions have a key role to play in managing the mental health of their sales force (Nordli, 2022). These do, however, come with some rather counternarrative implications surrounding the provision of salesperson autonomy. The results are consistent with logic that suggests that, despite autonomy's known benefits to salespeople, this often constructive resource can play a less desirable role in promoting resource loss in salespeople who are experiencing anxiety. While Strain Jr and Taylor (1997) discuss how the benefits of autonomy differ based on whether salespeople have a *need for* autonomy, the present study presents a case where salespeople in fact have a *need to have less* autonomy. For anxious individuals, this additional responsibility engendered by higher autonomy may serve only to increase resource loss by forcing a salesperson to use greater resources to manage their sales role.

Matthews et al. (2018) suggest that autonomy in certain situations can have negative outcomes with respect to increasing burnout, and the present study supports and expands on this logic, showing that under higher levels of a social climate of autonomy, the positive relationship between sales anxiety and both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization one month later are greater. Fig. 4d and e depict these relationships.

In both graphs, it is evident that, regardless of the level to which

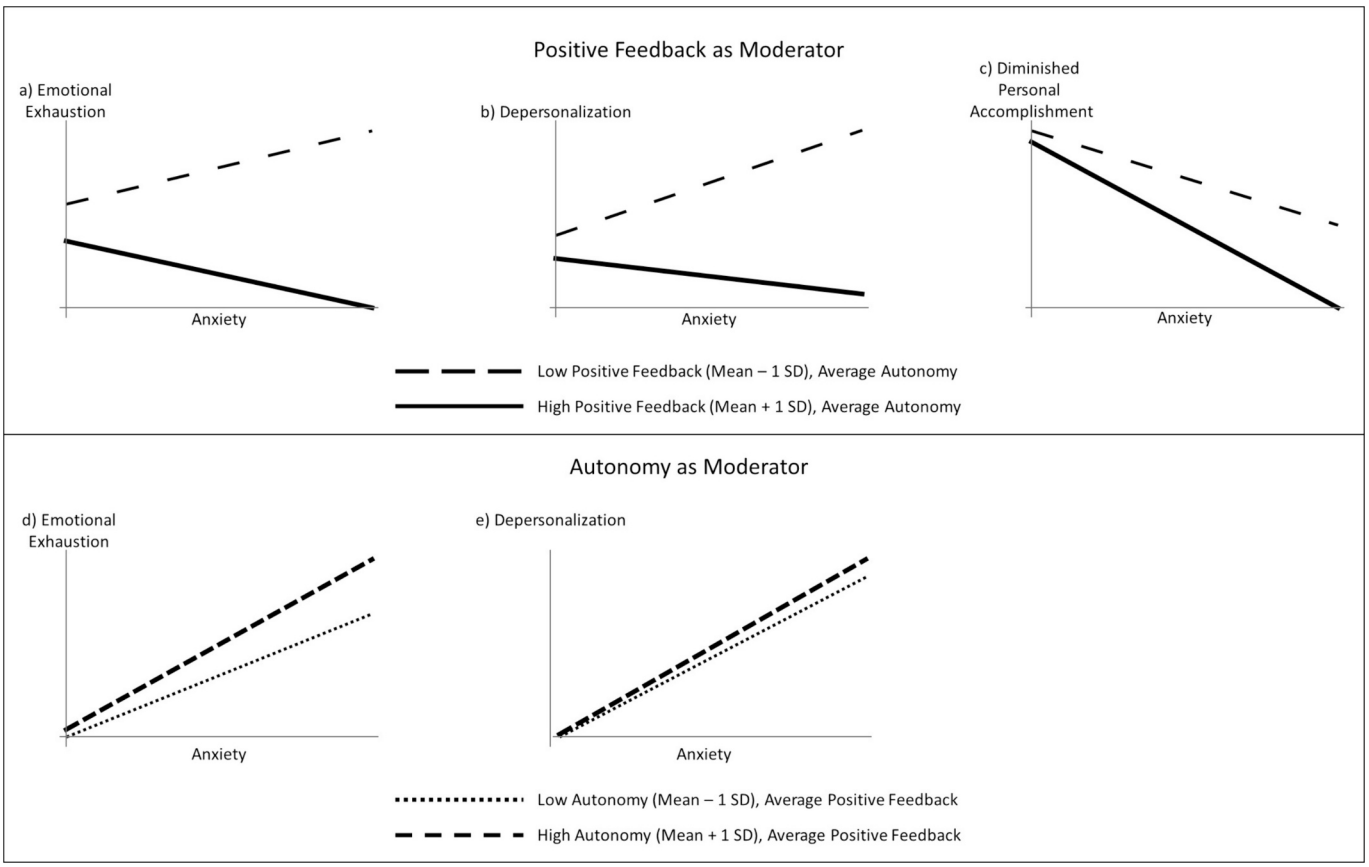

Fig. 4. Moderation plots.

salespeople perceive themselves to have autonomy, the relationships between levels of sales anxiety, and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, remain positive. However, the relationships become more positive for those working within highly autonomous sales roles. This might be explained as follows: in climates where salespeople have more autonomy support, they have to carry out more of their own managerial functions, set more of their own goals, make more decisions that may be more challenging, and plan more of their own workflow (Baard et al., 2004). For an anxious salesperson, this may be more difficult, since they are cognitively working much harder, and working less efficiently in their sales role (Agnihotri et al., 2016). Thus, when salespeople are more anxious, they are less effective at *using* their resources, and at the same time, are furnished with *fewer* external resources (i.e., as a consequence of being given more autonomy), resulting in sales anxiety having a more profound impact on resource drain (McCarthy et al., 2016). Therefore, in such situations, anxious individuals need *greater* guidance and structure, something less likely in roles characterized by a social climate of autonomy (Friend et al., 2019). To be clear, we do not suggest that managers are not providing *any* guidance or structure when giving autonomy to salespeople. Rather, we suggest that to alleviate the effect of anxiety on emotional exhaustion, managers may need to take a more hands-on approach to salespeople who suffer from greater levels of anxiety to help reduce resource loss and/or promote resource gain (McCarthy et al., 2016).

In addition to promoting greater resource loss, a social climate of autonomy also allows salespeople the freedom to further withdraw from their sales role if they wish (Hou, Da, Wei, & Zhang, 2022). The resource loss suffered when experiencing anxiety promotes salespeople to adopt protective actions (Verbeke & Bagozzi, 2000), with autonomy allowing anxious salespeople to withdraw from their sales role (e.g., from meeting clients, co-workers, or managers) as they seek to conserve resources. By providing extra guidance and structure, a sales manager can help replenish salesperson resources, leading to a reduction of salesperson protective actions and thus, reducing depersonalization.

Interestingly, autonomy exhibited no influence on the relationship between sales anxiety and diminished feelings of personal accomplishment. This is despite our expectation that a social climate of autonomy might facilitate the development of resources that align with feelings of accomplishment (e.g., self-efficacy). Perhaps the implied confidence of the sales manager when giving autonomy is unable to overcome the inherent lack of self-esteem and self-efficacy caused by anxiety (Bandura, 2015). The present findings are thus more consistent with the premise that when salespeople are uncertain, more concrete decision-making and responding to the needs of the salesperson yields greater benefits (Alavi, Ehlig, & Habel, 2022).

Although in the longer term resource conservation may yield benefits (e.g., reduced exhaustion and greater engagement), resource gain can also be promoted via external sources. In contrast to a social climate of autonomy, our moderator analysis indicates that positive (sales manager) feedback can mitigate resource loss, and/or promote resource gain for salespeople experiencing sales anxiety, reducing the impact of anxiety on all of the three components of burnout. Specifically, Fig. 4a and b show that, at low levels of positive feedback, the relationships between anxiety, and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization are positive, but that the relationships flip and become negative under high levels of positive feedback. In the latter situation, then, positive feedback appears to act to negate the downsides of anxiety on burnout. Fig. 4c shows that under low levels of positive feedback anxiety is (weakly) negatively related to diminished personal accomplishment, but that the relationship becomes stronger under high levels of positive feedback. Here, then, while even low levels of positive feedback seem to help reduce sales anxiety's impact on diminished personal accomplishment, high levels are particularly beneficial.

Accordingly, positive feedback appears to enable salespeople to

channel anxiety more productively, providing social support resources to salespeople that can substantially alter sales anxiety's negative impact on resource loss, reducing emotional exhaustion. With greater resource levels, salespeople may be less likely to invoke protective actions and be more engaged with their sales role, thus reducing depersonalization. In addition, when managers are providing positive feedback, this may increase specific personal resources including self-efficacy and self-belief, facilitating resource gains directly related to feelings of accomplishment. This study, therefore, supports the importance of the role played by sales managers in helping to maintain the mental health (and well-being) of their salespeople.

Previous studies look to understand the impact of managerial support that might be seen as more emotional in nature (e.g., Yavas & Babakus, 2011), yet feedback can also hold an informational value that can help in the mitigation of burnout, allowing salespeople to better understand their behaviors (Deeter-Schmelz, Kennedy, & Goebel, 2002). These findings support previous research that examines the role of social support resources in mitigating resource loss and facilitating resource gain (Campbell, Perry, Maertz Jr, Allen, & Griffeth, 2013; Halbesleben, 2006).

5.1. Theoretical contributions

The present study contributes to the emerging literature on sales force well-being in three key ways. First, the study sheds light on how the mental health of the sales force may be shaped, centering the notion of state anxiety in sales as a factor that contributes to each individual component of burnout. This contribution is proposed via the lens of COR theory, suggesting that sales anxiety acts as a resource loss facilitator that requires sales manager intervention. Although existing literature has suggested a relationship between anxiety and burnout (e.g., Koutsimani et al., 2019), the present study is the first to directly examine the impact of sales anxiety on burnout.

Second, the present study contributes to the emerging literature that examines the potentially detrimental effects of autonomy (e.g., Matthews et al., 2018). It is demonstrated that a social climate of autonomy, a constructive resource typically proposed to mitigate resource loss, has the potential to also act as a facilitator of resource loss in the presence of sales anxiety, providing a more nuanced view of the way resources evolve in response to environmental and personal conditions. Under this perspective, autonomy facilitates the impact of sales anxiety on both emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. These findings, in conjunction with Matthews et al. (2018), advise caution when considering autonomy as a universally beneficial managerial resource.

Finally, the present study also contributes to understanding the role of positive feedback in mitigating burnout. Positive feedback is demonstrated to potentially mitigate the impact of sales anxiety on each individual component of burnout. The results are consistent with the assertion that positive feedback can greatly alter and even neutralize sales anxiety's impact on emotional exhaustion and depersonalization. This effect is even more pronounced when examining the relationship between sales anxiety and diminished personal accomplishment, where even small amounts of positive feedback may be sufficient to alleviate the influence of sales anxiety (See Figs. 3 and 4).

5.2. Managerial contributions

Three key implications for sales managers can also be derived from our findings. First, the results can be taken as support for the idea that managers should keep a close eye on their subordinates' anxiety levels. This in turn can help sales managers to better understand their salespeople, allowing them to make more informed decisions regarding how they manage this anxiety, thus alleviating its impact on burnout.

A second key managerial implication relates to the need to consider how to better manage the detrimental impacts of anxiety on salesperson mental health by altering a salesperson's role. More specifically, sales managers can alter the social climate of autonomy provided to their salespeople depending upon the anxiety levels being experienced. When salespeople are anxious, sales managers should look to promote resource gain by providing greater levels of guidance and structure. This may be in regard to the activities a salesperson should participate in (or not), providing additional tools to use that help them conduct their sales role, increasing the frequency of accompanying salespeople in customer calls, or sharing information helping them to better navigate their sales role.

Additional coaching and setting general guidelines with clear goals may also help anxious salespeople by providing greater clarity (Hollet-Haudebert, Mulki, & Fournier, 2011), alongside motivating them to engage with their sales duties. Salespeople low in anxiety seem not to need such resources, and thus ceteris paribus are better equipped to utilize autonomy in their sales role.

Third, sales managers should also look to provide social support in the form of positive feedback to anxious salespeople. Positive feedback can act as external validation for a salesperson, and a resource boost that can reduce, and perhaps even prevent, the impact of sales anxiety on subsequent burnout symptoms. When a salesperson hears positive things about their performance, or about specific positive behaviors and/or attitudes that they are demonstrating, this can promote resource gain within a salesperson. By reducing the depersonalization aspect of any felt burnout, this, in turn, can help them become more engaged in their sales role. When providing positive feedback sales managers should make sure that their feedback is clear, less focused on sales numbers, and/or more focused on the positive behaviors or actions that a salesperson is taking. Such feedback will help motivate and encourage salespeople to a greater extent, while also aiding their feelings of accomplishment.

6. Conclusion

The present study provides novel findings contributing to the field of sales management. However, like all studies, it is not without limitations. One limitation concerns the use of single-source data with a relatively smaller sample, despite the longitudinal design. Future research should therefore look to use managerial or objective measures, and larger samples, to provide further validity to the findings. Second, although longitudinal in nature, the present study examines only between-person relationships, and therefore future research should look to understand the within-person relationships to provide further evidence of causality (See Childs, Lee, Cadogan, & Dewsnap, 2023; Childs, Lee, Dewsnap, & Cadogan, 2019). Such a design would provide more specific evidence of causality, thus facilitating a greater understanding of how burnout evolves in response to changes in sales anxiety.

Third, the present study also only examines the impact of sales anxiety on burnout. Future research could seek to better understand how anxiety operates in the sales role (i.e., specific antecedents and outcomes in different situations and activities), alongside further understanding how sales anxiety can influence wider salesperson mental health outcomes (e.g., depression, loneliness, and sleep disorders). Also, our research looks more generally at how sales anxiety impacts burnout within the sales role. Future research could look to parse out the different situations whereby state anxieties, the components of burnout, and their inter-relationships, occur, alongside identifying relevant boundary conditions to these relationships.

Fourth, our findings show that a social climate of autonomy moderates the relationships between sales anxiety and emotional exhaustion and depersonalization, but not diminished personal accomplishment. Future research could look to determine whether autonomy in specific situations (e.g., autonomy in value creation), or in different contexts, operates differently on the burnout consequences of sales anxiety, alongside examining the moderating roles of other social resources available to managers. Lastly, the literature also indicates that the causal ordering of the relationships between anxiety and burnout may be reciprocal, such that burnout may also drive anxiety (Koutsimani &

Montgomery, 2023). Although this was assessed in the present study, further research is needed to examine these temporal issues in more detail.

The present study acts as an introduction to examining the broad notion of the extent to which salespeople experience (state) sales anxiety within their sales role, and its impact on salesperson burnout. In doing so, the study provides further support to the premise that autonomy can have a detrimental impact on burnout in the right circumstances (via increased resource loss), while at the same time promoting the benefits of providing positive feedback to salespeople (via promoting resource gain). Further research is required to better delve into these important sales issues.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Dayle R.N. Childs: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Software, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Nick Lee:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **John W. Cadogan:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Supervision, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Belinda Dewsnap:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Supervision, Conceptualization.

Data availability

The authors are unable or have chosen not to specify which data has been used.

Appendix A. Measurement

Construct	Loading	CR	AVE
Sales Anxiety (7-point Likert scale) [a]		0.92	0.79
When undertaking my sales duties, I tend to:			
Feel nervous	0.85		
Become Apprehensive	0.91		
Feel uneasy	0.91		
Emotional exhaustion (1−100) sliding scale [b, z]		0.95	0.85
I feel…			
Item 2 of MBI-22*	–		
Item 3 of MBI-22	0.92		
Item 5 of MBI-22	0.97		
Item 6 of MBI-22	0.88		
Depersonalization (7-point Likert scale) [a, z]		0.89	0.74
At work…			
Item 12 of B2B MBI-22	0.86		
Item 15 of B2B MBI-22	0.93		
Item 16 of B2B MBI-22	0.78		
Diminished Personal Accomplishment (7-point Likert scale) [a, z]		0.77	0.53
I feel…			
Item 18 of B2B MBI-22	0.80		
Item 19 of B2B MBI-22	0.66		
Item 21 of B2B MBI-22	0.72		
Role Autonomy (7-point Likert scale) [a]		0.90	0.69
At work…			
I have significant control over how I do my job	0.77		
I can decide on my own how to go about doing my work	0.83		
I have independence and freedom in how I do my job	0.89		
My job allows me to use personal initiative or judgment when carrying out my work	0.82		
Positive Feedback (7-point Likert scale) [c]		0.95	0.87
My sales manager…			
Tells me when I do a good job	0.91		
Provides me with positive feedback	0.97		
Tells me when I am performing well	0.91		
Active Coping (9-point Likert scale) [d]		0.83	0.50
When faced with a problem in my sales role…			
I come up with several alternative solutions to the problem	0.83		
I make a plan and follow it	0.75		
I do what is necessary to solve the problem	0.60		
I just concentrate on what I have to do next – the next step	0.62		
I decide what I think should be done and try to tackle the situation	0.68		
Age		N/A	N/A
How old are you?	N/A		
Duration in sales Role		N/A	N/A
How long have you worked in your current sales role?	N/A		
Industry		N/A	N/A
What industry do you work in?	N/A		

$\chi^2 = 414.76$; df = 231; RMSEA = 0.072; SRMR = 0.061; CFI = 0.948; NNFI = 0.938; IFI = 0.949.

a: 1 = Strongly disagree … 7 = Strongly agree.

b: 1 = Not at all … 100 = Completely.

c: 1 = Never … 7 = All of the time.

d: 1 = Very strongly disagree to … 9 = Very strongly agree.

z: These items are not provided for copyright purposes.

*: Item deleted during model purification process.

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