The red and green signals for industrial salesforce: testing an integrated framework

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Abstract

Purpose – A highly competitive business environment needs a creative strategy for long-term survival and a competitive advantage in an uncertain market environment. This objective induces organizations to adopt innovative workplace behavior for better performance. Accordingly, this study aims to examine the impact of spirit at work (SAW), perceived identifiability and shared responsibility on innovative work behavior (IWB) and task performance.

Design/methodology/approach – The data was collected from 72 business-to-business (B2B) sales teams consisting of 561 employees working in Pakistan's B2B industries. The data was then analyzed using PROCESS macro to test the research hypotheses.

Findings – The results have shown a surprising and inconsistent finding where shared responsibility has a relatively more substantial and positive influence on IWB and task performance than perceived identifiability and SAW.

Research limitations/implications – The shared responsibility dimension of "social loafing theory" always negatively influences work-related outcomes, but this study refutes this claim. Therefore, researchers should explore social loafing theory in cultures with a higher collectivism score on the Hofstede cultural model.

Practical implications – This study motivates the sales manager to reassess the shared responsibility concept, as it may play a synergetic role in boosting innovation in selling approaches.

Originality/value – As per the researchers' best knowledge, research on social loafing theory has never been conducted in a selling context, specifically in a collectivistic society.

Keywords Performance, Innovative work behavior, Shared responsibility, Perceived identifiability, Spirit at work, Salesforce

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

In today's challenging environment, innovation is an indispensable element for organizational success, particularly in sales, where it plays a vital role (Yoshida *et al.*, 2014; Liu *et al.*, 2012; Shalley *et al.*, 2009). The research on industrial sales proposes that an organization should focus on the hasty development of market responses to avoid the negative influences of exogenous market forces, address competitive moves and satisfy consumer needs (Helm and Gritsch, 2014). In this regard, the literature recommends that organizations focus on their salesforces to effectively counter marketplace uncertainties and seize new opportunities (Banin *et al.*, 2016), because the salesforce has first-hand knowledge about consumers' preferences (Wang and Netemeyer, 2004). These researchers also claim that problem-oriented and creative approaches to selling are common traits of a successful salesforce.

In the current period of competitiveness and flat organizational structure, with rapid changes in the environment and customer demands, it has become difficult for the salesforce to fulfill its assigned tasks in a timely manner (Grant *et al.*, 2009). As technology advances and the market evolves, the completion of sales-related tasks, including identifying new prospects, finding consumers' needs and looking for tailored solutions, requires more innovative thinking. In this regard, organizations are continually seeking new ways to nurture innovative behaviors among employees (Gu *et al.*, 2015).

Storbacka *et al.* (2011) argue that firms rely on sales efforts to survive in a competitive environment, as the salesforce is becoming a more strategic asset than the traditional order-taker.

In industrial selling philosophies, the literature sees a drastically shifting paradigm where the salesforce usually depends on its team members to accomplish its tasks (Ahearne *et al.*, 2010). The researchers (Griffin *et al.*, 2007; Baba *et al.*, 2009) claimed that employees should take the initiative themselves whenever they face challenging situations. This context prevails in the selling background because these job requirements are not anticipated. Hence, some work requirements for the individual salesperson cannot be formalized (Dubinsky *et al.*, 1986). Creative behaviors are necessary for inventive results and perform a crucial role in team and group effectiveness (Amabile, 1996). The literature shows numerous findings on the relationship between individual creativity and group phenomena (Shalley and Perry-Smith, 2001). The researchers (Valentine *et al.*, 2011; Shalley *et al.*, 2009) argued that the group processes have the potential to impact on individual's creativity. On the other hand, the social influence within groups may hamper the innovation potential due to various factors like production blocking and social loafing (Paulus *et al.*, 2002; Valentine *et al.*, 2011). However, one aspect that considerably increases the individual's innovative behavior is the availability of creative team members (Zhou and Shalley, 2003).

In isolation, we argued that not all industrial selling approaches are preplanned, especially in an uncertain market situation. There is a requirement of emergent selling behaviors that may be more pertinent. Pakistan is one of the largest emerging economies, but uncertainty is still strongly prevalent in its business market due to having the lowest credit to GDP ratio in South Asia and 22 bailout packages by the International Monetary Fund. Market uncertainty is particularly relevant in Pakistan due to political instability, a fluctuating dollar rate, account deficits, volatile goods prices and nondiversified sectors that create severe issues for the smooth operation of business. Since the salesforce is working under pressure to respond proactively to market situations (Chonko *et al.*, 2002; Banin *et al.*, 2016), we argued that sales success is not solely based on sales planning but also on the salesperson's context-relevant response to a particular consumer need. To achieve said sales success, different options may be utilized: (1) real-time innovativeness while interacting with customers (Wang and Netemeyer, 2004; Strutton *et al.*, 2009), and (2) using adaptive selling methods according to the customer's requirements (Sujan *et al.*, 1994). The researchers claimed that both options are useful (Wang and Miao, 2015; Martinaityte and Sacramento, 2013), but the empirical and theoretical evidence lags concerning how the salesforce will perform under certain exigency conditions. Accordingly, the current study ascertains the question: how will the salesforce perform in an unexpected circumstance? We propose that perceived identifiability and spirit at work (SAW) may act as a green light and shared responsibility as a red light for salesforce creative behavior and performance. Additionally, this study also investigates innovative work behavior (IWB) as a mediator in the relationships mentioned above.

The conceptual model of this study relies on social loafing theory, which proposes that perceived identifiability positively associates and shared responsibility negatively associates with performances. In this research, we advance our understanding of how mutual understanding among business-to-business (B2B) sales forces puts efforts together to bring innovation into their selling strategies and achieve higher performance. We also build our relationship based on cultural differences, as the organizations are doing businesses in diverse cultures with different cultural values, competition factors and economic and social conditions, which have a significant influence on employees' work behaviors. The researchers use Western theories in other cultures with few theoretical advancements; hence, implementing culturally different theories is of significant importance in conducting empirical studies. To support comparative researchers, the *Journal of Management*, *Annual Review of Psychology*, *Organizational Research Methods*, *International Business Studies* and *Academy of Management Journal* published reviews papers, empirical papers, research notes and methodologies to determine the cultural differences. Hence, this research has a significant breakthrough in testing Western theory in collectivistic society and has implications for other collectivistic societies, including China, Japan, Brazil, Singapore, Portugal, Greece and India.

2. Literature review

2.1 Spirit at work, innovative work behavior and task performance

The discussion on workplace spirituality started with Kinjerski and Skrypnek's (2004) and Mitroff and Denton's (1999) definitions. These academicians investigated different aspects of spirituality in organizations and published multiple books (see *Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Organizational Performance, 2003; The Routledge Companion to Management and Workplace Spirituality, 2019; The Palgrave Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Fulfillment, 2018; Fostering Spirituality in the Workplace: A Leader's Guide to Sustainability, 2013*), journals (see *Journal for the Study of Spirituality, Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, The International Journal of Religion and Spirituality in Society, Journal of Management, Spirituality and Religion*) and cover stories of business magazines like *Fortune* and *Business Week*. Despite increasing the attention on workplace spirituality and its significant insights on various issues, researchers also criticized this concept for lacking critical thinking and rigor (Afsar and Badir, 2017).

There are numerous definitions of SAW, but the central theme behind all explanations is workplace connectedness, values of the organizations, alignment of personal beliefs, social ties with colleagues, refusal of greed, ethical concerns, avoidance of materialism, focus on wellness, meaningfulness and shift toward wholeness (for reference, see Fry, 2003; Karakas, 2010; Marques, 2010; Milliman *et al.*, 2003; Ashmos and Duchon, 2000; Fagley and Adler, 2012). Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2004) define SAW as a divergent state that contains intense feelings of well-being, a sense of transcendence and perfection, an awareness to understand the importance of others rather than self, a sense of connectedness to a common purpose and others and a belief to contribute through his/her work. The SAW scale captures the experiences of individuals

within an organization who are energized and passionate about their tasks. This scale comprises mystical experience, spiritual connection, sense of community and engaging work (Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004).

During the past decade, research on SAW and its outcomes increased significantly from research scholars, organizations and consultants (de Jong and Den Hartog, 2010; Afsar and Badir, 2017; Saks, 2011), but studies are still scarce when it comes to IWB. The term IWB is defined as the identification of problems and the introduction of useful and new ideas, as well as the behaviors required for exploiting, launching and implementing creative ideas to enhance individual or business performance (Farr and Ford, 1990; De Jong and Den Hartog, 2010). Scott and Bruce (1994) describe IWB as a set of interrelated activities meant to recognize, develop, modify, adapt and implement ideas. Creativity is the first phase of IWB, where an individual recognizes a problem or identifies a performance gap and initiates an idea to solve the problem (West, 2002).

Milliman *et al.* (2003) claimed that alignment, sense of community and meaningful work are essential aspects of workplace spirituality that are positively linked with IWB. Afsar *et al.* (2016) claimed that employees disoriented themselves from collective purpose, interdependence interconnection, meaning and sense of self-worth, all of which badly hampers innovation. Workplace spirituality spurs consciousness and raises awareness, thus increasing employees' intuitive skills to develop more compelling and purposeful ideas that boost innovation. Spiritual feelings support an individual's creativity process (Gupta *et al.*, 2014) and help them communicate, persuade and interact with other employees to support new ideas and practical implementations (Ishaq and Hussain, 2016). In recent studies, it was found that there is a positive impact of workplace spirituality and IWB in Thailand and China (Afsar and Rehman, 2015; Afsar *et al.*, 2016). Therefore, H1 is as follows:

H1. The SAW is positively related to IWB.

Spirituality has significance with the success of societies, organizations and employees. SAW connects the employees with their work activities, resulting in higher performance (Jurkiewicz and Giacalone, 2004). Gull and Doh (2004) claim that employees who perceive meaning in their work and who coordinate, interact and connect with their job show higher performance. The researchers (Wagner and Gregory, 2015; Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2004) concluded that SAW has direct and indirect relationships with individual and organizational-related work outcomes, including job satisfaction and organizational performance. For instance, the studies found a strong correlation between spirituality and productivity (Secrest *et al.*, 2005; Marques, 2010; Karakas, 2010). Similar relationships are also found in the studies of Phipps (2012), Tevichapong (2012) and Rego and Pina e Cunha (2008).

Spirituality is the bottom line of the businesses, and numerous studies confirmed that the organizations providing opportunities to their employees for spiritual development showed higher performance (Fry and Matherly, 2006; Chawla and Guda, 2010). Chawla and Guda (2017) enlisted organizations, such as Timberland, The Body Shop and Ouimet-Cardon Bleu Inc., that work on spiritual development and achieve positive results in

terms of performance, efficiency and profits. Moreover, a comprehensive qualitative study by Cohen and Bailey (1997) concluded that salesforce with a stronger spiritual mindset increases their performance and satisfaction level. Therefore, H2 is as follows:

H2. The SAW is positively related to task performance.

Organizations have to upsurge their efficiency, responsiveness and flexibility by taking the volatile nature of businesses and responding to the actions of competitors (Reuvers *et al.*, 2008; Ishaq and Hussain, 2016). This paves the way for continuous improvement in the company's offerings and in the employees' behavior and working environment. The researchers argue that additional efforts should be undertaken to examine the individual's role in shaping innovativeness, which ultimately affects performance (Shanker *et al.*, 2017; Bilton and Cummings, 2010). Afsar and Rehman (2015) argued that the role of IWB in increasing employee performance is sparse.

Jiménez-Jiménez and Sanz-Valle (2011) argued that the role of IWB in increasing employee performance is sparse. They further claimed that IWB requires individuals to practice proactive behaviors through novel ideas and personal initiatives associated directly with their performance. Willingham (2006) argued that the salesforce with a higher level of spirituality always thinks why they should sell the product/service to show increased performance. Overall, it is believed that higher spiritual salespeople are more likely to generate higher profits, be adaptive in a sales context, customer-centric, and exhibit higher productivity and performance (Fry *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, the studies of Zhou and Shalley (2003), Shalley *et al.* (2009) and Afsar and Rehman (2015) found the positive role of IWB in shaping individual performance. Therefore, H3 and H4 are as follows:

H3. The IWB is positively related to task performance.

H4. The IWB mediates the relationship between SAW and task performance.

2.2 Perceived identifiability, innovative work behavior and task performance

As organizations are operating in increasingly dynamic and fast-paced business environments, their ability to quickly adapt and advance their processes, products and services has become a key factor for success (Janssen and van Yperen, 2004). The term IWB describes an employee's ability to play an essential role within an organization or in a group by generating, realizing and promoting new ideas (de Jong and den Hartog, 2010; Œrne *et al.*, 2017). The academic literature also has several other concepts closely related to IWB (Spanuth and Wald, 2017) like job innovation, innovative job performance and employee innovativeness (Hammond *et al.*, 2011; Abstein and Spieth, 2014). As a critical driver of IWB, influential leaders foster the creation and implementation of new ideas by setting inspirational goals, encouraging a climate of learning and facilitating productive exchange among employees (Alfes *et al.*, 2013).

Wagner (1995) defines perceived identifiability as an employee's perception in a given situation where his/her

behavior is discerned or observed by his/her team members. This concept is taken from the social loafing theory used to study individual behavior in teams (Hoon and Tan, 2008). Orden *et al.* (1998) define social loafing as "the phenomenon of individuals' performing less well when they work in a group and when their efforts are combined in that group than when they work alone". Perceived identifiability is considered an important dimension of social loafing theory (Gammage *et al.*, 2001). De Cremer *et al.* (2001) argued that when employees observe their fellows' behavior, they exert more effort to maintain the status. Hence, individual identifiability within the team is one of the plausible ways to elucidate social loafing problems. On the other hand, if these efforts are not observed, then the employee relinquishes more significant efforts.

In the case of IWB, perceived identifiability is related to innovative behaviors among team members. Shih and Susanto (2017) argued that perceived identifiability among employees fosters them to produce creative ideas and work harder. The employees with identifiability perceptions are intrinsically motivated to create, endorse and realize innovative ideas at the workplace as their efforts are easily recognized and observed (De Cremer *et al.*, 2001). Hence, H5 is as follows:

H5. The perception of identifiability in a group positively relates to IWB.

Karau and Williams (1993) argued that social loafing is a robust phenomenon that can generate a wide variety of results and affect gender and tasks. The effect of social loafing can be moderated with the help of other factors including (1) the involvement of the task in the employee's personality, (2) performance with strangers or friends and (3) the perception of individuals regarding their unique contributions to the completion of given tasks (Harkins and Petty, 1982). Based on said factors, the social loafing paradigm can be restricted within the functions that are considered meaningless: low performance with strangers, lack of intrinsic motivation and unimportance in a noncompetitive environment. For instance, increased identifiability enhances individual contributions and personal involvement in the task (Harkins and Petty, 1982). In perceived identifiability, the employee works harder to achieve better performance (De Cooman *et al.*, 2009; Cook *et al.*, 2000). Hence, H6 and H7 are as follows:

H6. The perception of identifiability in a group positively relates to task performance.

H7. The IWB mediates the relationship of perceived identifiability and task performance.

2.3 Shared responsibility, innovative work behavior and task performance

Wagner (1995) defines perceived shared responsibility as the changes in employee feelings toward personal responsibility in a group. In the shared responsibility context, the employee believes that his/her responsibility is reduced when other employees are present within the team (Kerr and Bruun, 1981). Forsyth *et al.* (2002) claimed that feelings of shared responsibility are a "responsibility diffusion." The researchers (Weldon and Mustari, 1988; Harkins *et al.*, 1980; Forsyth *et al.*, 2002) confirmed that

shared responsibility creates social loafing. From the IWB perspective, Weldon and Gargano (1988) claimed that shared responsibility negatively affects the team's efforts and reduces the IWB. Brickner *et al.* (1986) claimed that reduced responsibility decreases the intrinsic motivation among team members, and they are repelled from taking tasks. Additionally, Shih and Susanto (2017) also contended that shared responsibility hampers the team members' motivation to behave innovatively. Hence, the H8 hypothesis is as follows:

H8. The perception of shared responsibility negatively influences the IWB.

Wagner (1995) claimed that if the perception of shared responsibility arises in a team member, then he/she may consider his/her presence as inconsequential for the team's success. This perception is negatively linked with performance as he/she believes that their contribution to task completion is insignificant or small (Earley, 1989). In a sales setting, certain sales representatives put less effort and time into team efforts but expect an equal reward, which seems unfair to other team members. The researchers (e.g. Karau and Williams, 1993) claim that the circumstances in which an individual employee's contribution is difficult to measure are prevalent and make it easy for him/her to evade a job task that negatively influences performance. Liden *et al.* (2004) also conclude that task characteristics, lack of cohesiveness and group size exacerbate loafing. Based on this discussion, we propose that perceived shared responsibility is negatively associated with task performance. Therefore, *H9* and *H10* hypotheses are as follows:

H9. The perception of shared responsibility negatively influences task performance.

H10. The IWB mediated the relationship of shared responsibility and task performance. The conceptual model is presented in Figure 1.

3. Research methods

3.1 Sample and data collection procedure
The sample of this study was sales teams working in Pakistani-based industrial organizations. The conceptual model of our research was suitable in a Pakistani business context for several reasons. The Pakistani economy ranked at 23rd place worldwide in terms of purchasing power parity, while O'Neill (2018) listed it as one of eleven countries with a high potential for growth along with Brazil, Russia, India & China countries. These factors show an appropriate background to explore Western theories in an emerging economy. Moreover, the sales organizations saw an exponential advancement due to increased business operating costs, rising production and high inflation.

The term "team" defines the working units accountable for creating certain products and services (Cohen and Bailey, 1997). The respondents belong to a knowledge-intensive industry where teams are specially designed to work closely to meet business customers' requirements. The reasons for opting for B2B industrial organizations are (1) these industries are considered as the best source of IWB, and (2) the employees in these industries are working under fierce pressure, a tumultuous environment and high turnover. Hence, locating

Figure 1 Conceptual framework
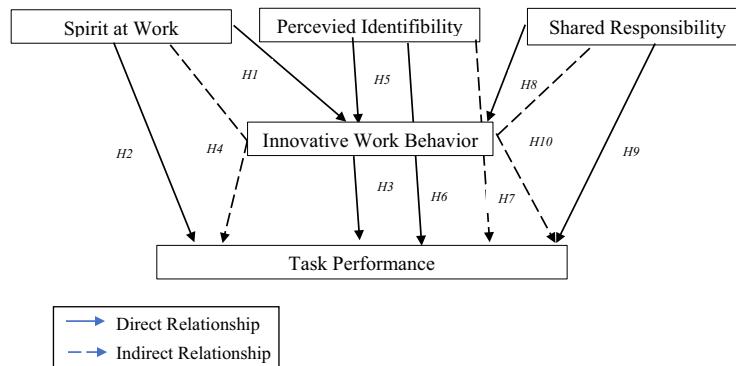
and accessing the right employees for this research is a key problem in this study. We set two conditions before selecting the industrial salesforce teams for this study: first, the team should consist of four or more and have a supervisor/manager, and second, all team members should be accountable for outcomes and work with common objectives.

After obtaining the necessary information about the working environment and team formation, one of our team members visited the organizations, met with the supervisor/manager and explained the purpose of the current research. After confirmation from the supervisor/manager for data collection, the research team visited the offices and personally administered the questionnaire after their weekly sales meetings. To avoid common method variance, the data was collected through multiple sources where the supervisor/manager evaluated the team's IWB and task performance. Simultaneously, the respondents' questions on perceived identifiability, shared responsibility and SAW were filled. The data collection phase consisted of two time intervals: (1) at time 1 (July 2018–September 2018), data collection from respondents about perceived identifiability, SAW and shared responsibility, and (2) at time 2 (October 2018–January 2019), data collection from the immediate supervisor/manager on IWB and task performance.

After eliminating responses from teams with less than four members and from those missing information questionnaires, the final sample consists of 72 teams with 561 respondents. The majority of the respondents were male (74%), and most of the respondents were undergraduate degree holders (70%). Furthermore, 40% of respondents were 26–35 years old, and the teams' sizes ranged from 6 to 11 members. Regarding experience, 49% of respondents had 2–3 years of experience, whereas all managers had five years of experience or more in a sales setting. The teams worked in multiple industries, including telecommunications/IT, pharmaceuticals, electronics, chemicals, petroleum and financial/banking industries.

3.2 Measurements

The responses of each construct were taken using a five-point Likert scale. The nine-item IWB scale (α = 0.89) was derived from Janssen and van Yperen (2004). Spirit at work (α = 0.86) was measured on 18 items from the study of Kinjerski and Skrypnek (2004). The perceived identifiability (α = 0.91) and shared responsibility (α = 0.90) were measured on the three-item scale each (Wagner, 1995). Finally, industrial

salesforce teams' task performance was measured on a 17-item scale of DeRue and Morgeson (2007). The researchers used subjective measures to assess performance (Narver and Slater, 1990). Prior literature finds a strong association between objective performance assessments and their subjective counterparts (Dess and Robinson, 1984). The empirical model also included control variables to avoid plausible confounds associations with innovative work behavior, team formation and performance. Those control variables were compensation type (Slater and Olson, 2000), selling experience (Rapp *et al.*, 2008), industry type (Armstrong and Sweeney, 1994) and competitive intensity (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). The measuring scales are available in Appendix.

4. Results

4.1 Measurement Model

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) used AMOS 22 to assess the measurement model and psychometric properties of focal constructs in this study. The result shows (Table 1) acceptable model fitness (χ^2/df = 1554.2/790; $p < 0.01$, SRMR = 0.06, RMSEA = 0.049, CFI = 0.969, NNFI = 0.957, NFI = 0.921). The average variance extracted (AVE) for all variables was greater than the threshold value of 0.50 (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988); the composite reliability of constructs ranged from 0.83 to 0.91. In contrast, heterotrait–monotrait values were less than 0.90 thresholds (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). In addition to these results, the variance extracted by the traits was significantly greater than the variance explained by error and the common method factor. These statistics indicated strong support for reliabilities, discriminants and convergent validities of constructs used in this study (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Finally, common method bias was not a concern in this study as the data was collected through multi-sources.

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 2. The relationships between the constructs were below 0.50, indicating that they were different from each other. Surprisingly, we found that shared responsibility, contrary to conceptual underpinnings, was correlated positively (p = 0.001) with IWB and task performance.

4.2 Main Effects

In line with established procedures proposed by Hair *et al.* (2014), we used structural equation modeling using the

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Table 1 Measurement indices

Construct	Items	Factor Loading	AVE[a]	α[b]	CR[c]	Error[d]	Method[e]	Trait[f]
Perceived Identifiability (PI)	PI1	0.745	0.89	0.85	0.62	0.28	0.01	0.72
	PI2	0.791						
	PI3	0.824						
Shared Responsibility (SR)	SR1	0.709	0.88	0.83	0.61	0.21	0.02	0.77
	SR2	0.747						
	SR3	0.776						
Spirit at Work (SW)	SW1	0.721	0.90	0.86	0.65	0.23	0.02	0.76
	SW2	0.716						
	SW3	0.756						
	SW4	0.782						
	SW5	0.789						
	SW6	0.772						
	SW7	0.761						
	SW8	0.800						
	SW9	0.798						
	SW10	0.754						
	SW11	0.719						
	SW12	0.798						
	SW13	0.750						
	SW14	0.716						
	SW15	0.777						
	SW16	0.749						
	SW17	0.724						
	SW18	0.799						
Innovative Work Behavior (IWB)	IB1	0.771	0.92	0.90	0.67	0.18	0.00	0.85
	IB2	0.738						
	IB3	0.774						
	IB4	0.798						
	IB5	0.750						
	IB6	0.776						
	IB7	0.711						
	IB8	0.729						
	IB9	0.757						
Task Performance (TP)	TP1	0.727	0.93	0.89	0.64	0.06	0.09	0.84
	TP2	0.785						
	TP3	0.762						
	TP4	0.753						
	TP5	0.742						
	TP6	0.755						
	TP7	0.733						
	TP8	0.740						
	TP9	0.753						
	TP10	0.726						
	TP11	0.705						
	TP12	0.782						
	TP13	0.731						
	TP14	0.766						
	TP15	0.722						
	TP16	0.729						
	TP17	0.801						
Competitive Intensity (CI)	CI1	0.729	0.84	0.91	0.60	0.15	0.02	0.80
	CI2	0.812						
	CI3	0.771						
	CI4	0.825						

Notes: [a]Average variance extracted (AVE); [b]Cronbach`s alpha; [c]Composite reliability; [d]Percentage of variance explained by error; [e]Percentage of variance explained by common method factor; [f]Percentage of variance explained by constructs

Table 2 Descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
PI	4.10	0.76	1.00							
SR	4.15	0.83	0.24**	1.00						
SW	3.99	0.54	0.39**	0.26**	1.00					
IWB	3.94	0.49	0.22**	0.18**	0.19**	1.00				
TP	3.81	0.44	0.35**	0.29**	0.30**	0.31**	1.00			
CI	4.05	0.74	−0.10	0.07	−0.03	0.06	0.01	1.00		
Compensation	3.87	2.33	0.07	0.05	−0.01	0.02	−0.07	0.03	1.00	
Selling Experience	4.91	2.26	−0.03	0.05	−0.01	0.18*	0.16*	0.02	−0.06	1.00

Notes: *Significance at 0.05 level; ** *significance at 0.01 level

maximum likelihood method to measure direct effects. The results indicated that perceived identifiability was found to have a positive and significant impact on IWB (b = 0.490, p = 0.001: H1), and task performance (b = 0.354, p = 0.001: H2). Similarly, SAW also has a significant and positive impact on IWB (b = 0.357, p = 0.001: H5), and task performance (b = 0.328, p = 0.001: H6). Contrary to the hypotheses, shared responsibility was found to have a significantly positive influence on both IWB (b = 0.409, p = 0.001: H8) and task performance (b = 0.377, p = 0.001: H9). The plausible reasons for this surprising result are given in discussion section. Moreover, the IWB of B2B sales teams was a predictor of task performance (b = 0.431, p = 0.001: H4) (Table 3).

4.3 Mediation Effects
Hayes (2012) propose a conditional process to get better results to identify indirect effects. The same process was performed on the data using PROCESS in SPSS 20. The researcher claimed that this process produced reasonably accurate results (Hayes, 2012) as compared with the widely accepted Sobel test (Hair *et al.*, 2014). The indirect effects (see Table 4) of perceived identifiability, SAW and shared responsibility on task performance via IWB were conducted based on 10,000 bootstrapping samples estimated with a 95% confidence

interval as proposed by Hayes (2012). Perceived identifiability was a significant predictor of IWB (b = 0.490, p = 0.001), and IWB was found to have positive and significant influence on task performance (b = 0.431, p = 0.001). The total variance explained by the independent variable was 52%. The results showed that the indirect effect of perceived identifiability on task performance was significant (b = 0.290. SE = 0.052, 95% CI = 0.2980–0.4562). Similarly, SAW was a significant predictor of IWB (b = 0.357, p = 0.001). The results showed that the 45% variance extracted from the model and the indirect relationship of SAW on task performance via IWB was significant (b = 0.179. SE = 0.038, 95% CI = 0.3165–0.4802). Additionally, the indirect impact of shared responsibility on task performance in the presence of IWB was also significant (R^2 = 0.41, b = 0.264. SE = 0.065, 95% CI = 0.1994–0.3145). Hence, the mediating hypotheses H4, H7 and H10 are supported.

5. Discussion and implications
This research examines the influence of SAW, perceived shared responsibility and perceived identifiability on task performance. We also examine the mediating role of IWB in the B2B industrial salesforce's above relationships. The previous studies

Table 3 Direct effects

	Innovative Work Behavior			Task Performance		
	Beta Coefficient	Std. Error	p	Beta Coefficient	Std. Error	p
Perceived Identifiability	0.490	0.060	0.001	0.354	0.052	0.001
	$R^2 = 0.324, F = 402, p < 0.001$			$R^2 = 0.420, F = 312, p < 0.001$		
Spirit at Work	0.357	0.049	0.001	0.328	0.045	0.001
	$R^2 = 0.419, F = 355, p < 0.001$			$R^2 = 0.451, F = 443, p < 0.001$		
Shared Responsibility	0.409	0.063	0.001	0.377	0.050	0.001
	$R^2 = 0.302, F = 265, p < 0.001$			$R^2 = 0.399, F = 362, p < 0.001$		
Innovative Work Behavior				0.431	0.053	0.001
				$R^2 = 0.360, F = 301, p < 0.001$		

Table 4 Mediation results

Path	R^2	F-Statistics	Effect	Boot SE	LLCI–ULCI	z-test
PI → IWB →TP	0.52	362, p = 0.001	0.290	0.052	0.2980–0.4562	7.972
SAW → IWB →TP	0.45	409, p = 0.001	0.179	0.038	0.3165–0.4802	6.034
SR → IWB →TP	0.41	324, p = 0.001	0.264	0.065	0.1994–0.3145	8.025

mainly emphasized positive drivers of IWB and task performance; this research also includes the factors that may negatively influence IWB and task performance. Additionally, this study also expands the literature on the role of social loafing theory in the industrial salesforce setting. The 72 sales team results showed that spirituality and perceived identifiability positively influence IWB and task performance. Surprisingly, shared responsibility has a relatively more substantial impact on IWB and task performance, contrary to the social loafing theory and study hypothesis.

This study revealed that SAW has a positive impact on IWB and the task performance of B2B sales teams working in different industries of Pakistan. This result is consistent with previous studies of Afsar and Rehman (2015) and Afsar et al. (2016). The past literature found that workplace spirituality is positively linked with personal fulfillment, trust, completeness, sense of wholeness, work satisfaction and employee engagement (Krishnakumar and Neck, 2002; Saks, 2011), all of which are linked with IWB. Workplace spirituality also positively influences profitability and performance (Duchon and Plowman, 2005). Spiritual feelings help employees to be involved in innovative cognition processes and discretionary efforts to support their team members in generating and implementing new ideas. Afsar and Rehman (2015) claimed that workplace spirituality raises awareness among employees, which increases innovation, enhances intuitive abilities, creates an experience of consciousness and helps develop compelling and purposeful ideas. When an employee believes that his/her job roles are essential and meaningful to him/her, he/she becomes involved in searching for new solutions to a specific problem (Gilson and Shalley, 2004). These solutions are realized when all team members are persuaded toward common goals.

This research also claims that the perception of a salesforce's identifiability impacts on IWB and task performance. The employees often work with their co-team members to achieve collective tasks (Kozslowski and Bell, 2013). In a sales setting, team formation is a common practice to elicit more participation and greater motivation to achieve higher performance (Mesmer-Magnus and DeChurch, 2009). The social loafing theory proposes that individual team members may put in less effort (Karau and Williams, 1993). Among various factors, the perceived identifiability eliminated or reduced the negative influence of social loafing (Williams et al., 1981), increased involvement in tasks (Brickner et al., 1986), strengthening group cohesion (Williams, 1981) and elevating the sense of individual support (Harkins and Petty, 1982). Shih and Susanto (2017) claimed that the more an employee perceives that his/her contributions are identified, the more he/she is involved in IWB.

Weldon and Gargano (1988) claimed that cognitive effort is reduced when an employee feels that his/her contribution is not appreciated in a team setting. Conversely, the social cognitive process and social group comparisons establish a coworker's innovative behavior. In light of social group comparison, team members are motivated by intragroup and intergroup rivalry through observing each other's performances, and they then attempt to achieve higher accomplishments (Paulus et al., 2002). Moreover, creative co-workers are considered role models for others to imitate based on the element of social

cognitive theory termed observational learning (Bandura, 1986). Zhou and Shalley (2003) also argued that observational learning fosters employees to develop strategies and gain innovative skills in the workplace.

Surprisingly, this study reveals that shared responsibility in the Pakistani B2B salesforce positively influences IWB and task performance. This result contradicts previous studies and social loafing theory, where no research endorses the positive relationship of shared responsibility with any individual or organizational outcomes. As a result, a higher perception of shared responsibility in the team increases their ability to act creatively and perform better. This finding contradicts cognitive loafing as proposed by Weldon and Gargano (1988). They argued that cognitive loafing negatively affects the employee's ability to formulate new ideas, reducing IWB. This study also claims that a salesperson perceives shared responsibility as concerned with producing quality output, leading to higher IWB and performance.

Among various arguments to support the positive influence of shared responsibility with IWB and task performance, we poist that learning is an important aspect that we use to support the contradictory finding of shared responsibility, task performance and IWB. Bontis et al. (2002) argued that organizational learning originates and improves organizational or individual-level learning as a portfolio of knowledge, skills and abilities for handling tasks. As previous studies noted, knowledge is a transitory source whose credibility and relevance are both context and time-dependent and may be categorized as tacit knowledge and explicit knowledge (Augier and Vendelø, 1999). Tacit knowledge cannot be verbalized or articulated and dwells in spontaneous monarchy (Foos et al., 2006), but it can also be employed effectively in an organization. The researchers concluded that knowledge interaction is one of the fundamental aspects of knowledge sharing (Matošková and Smᐧšná, 2017). Moreover, knowledge interaction can combine multiple pieces of tacit information to create an easy path to achieve greater performance Subanidja and Hadiwidjojo, 2017). Tamer Cavusgil et al. (2003) also claimed that tacit knowledge increases a salesforce's thinking capabilities and found that the more tacit knowledge is shared with teammates, the higher chances teams have to innovate successfully.

We propose that salespersons acquire tacit knowledge from spiritual factors, failure in closing the sales, primordial nuance in selling with some consumers, intense competition and experience from different organizations. Voluntary sharing, training and experience in the selling process is anticipated to increase performance (Sigala and Chalkiti, 2007) and help the salesforce to realize economic gains, long-term organizational success (Chen and Mohamed, 2010) and value creation (Arnett and Wittmann, 2014). Seidler-de Alwis and Hartmann (2008) claimed that tacit knowledge has an enormous ability to encourage a salesforce's creative behavior. The study of Škerlavaj et al. (2010) also maintained that the exchange of tacit knowledge is a driver of innovation that can be supported and developed by aspects of organizational culture such as supervisory support, knowledge sharing and team building. Hence, we derive that tacit knowledge sharing between salesforce members increases their innovation and is taken as a tool to generate a favorable selling ambiance that directly contributes to better performance. We also claimed that tacit

knowledge exchange in the selling context enhances the ability to solve urgent and uncertain issues, handle selling issues with creativity, sell creatively and precisely increase innovative behavior and better performance.

National culture is also considered an explanation for the positive impact of shared responsibility on IWB and task performance. The researchers consider national culture as an informal institution (Dikova *et al.*, 2010; Deephouse *et al.*, 2016). A national culture is a significant predictor of a nation's citizens' beliefs and values, which proscribes certain behaviors and recommends others (Ren and Gray, 2009). Berry *et al.* (1997) claimed that nationality explains three times more variance in job surveys than education, gender or age. Similarly, Lenartowicz and Roth (2001) identified that culture affects performance and motivation significantly. Moreover, cultural dimensions have been found to influence individuals' psychological contracts with organizations and their perceptions of certain corporate behaviors (Newburry and Yakova, 2006; Hofstede, 2001).

Among various frameworks, Hofstede (2001) is the most prominent cultural model to understand international differences. Hofstede initially acknowledged four dimensions: masculinity, individualism, power distance and uncertainty avoidance. We used the individualism–collectivism dimension to back our argument as 52% of studies used this dimension to identify cross-cultural differences (Engelen and Brettel, 2011). Individualistic culture relates to the degree to which residents of a country desire to focus on their objectives, whereas collectivistic culture prioritizes in-group goals over individual benefits (Hofstede, 2001). Pakistan is considered a robustly collectivistic society as it scores 14/100 on the Hofstede model. Hence, the residents of this collectivistic culture perceive organizations as influencing their abilities to achieve mutual goals effectively. Even though life-long employment is a severe issue in collectivist cultures, especially in Pakistan, the organizations still sense a responsibility to provide a helping and caring culture and consider their employees as a family. The employees in collectivistic societies value group rewards, benefits for society and joint efforts, which increase observers' trust and lead to greater respect. As Pakistan is a collectivistic society, with the employees working together with their team members to achieve mutual goals. Given that previous studies have found that culture influences employees' perceptions of individual and organizational behaviors, we concluded that national culture contributed to the positive role of shared responsibility in fostering IWB and achieving higher performance.

5.1 Theoretical implications

This study offers several theoretical contributions. First, the literature requires more studies that address how spirituality, perceived identifiability and shared responsibility influence IWB and performance. However, the researchers emphasize social loafing theory but never discuss (as per our knowledge) a selling context specifically in a collectivistic society. To fill the identified research gap, the current research imported spirituality and social loafing dimensions into the research context and examined their relationships with the B2B salesforce's IWB and task performance. It also sheds new insight into social loafing and task performance by introducing

IWB as a mediator. Unlike other studies, our research found that shared responsibility positively influences IWB and task performance. Thus, this research shows an important theoretical implication for both IWB and social loafing literature by conceptualizing that IWB not only triggers through spirituality and perceived identifiability but also through shared responsibility.

While salesforce behavior under urgent and uncertain conditions persists in attracting academic and managerial inquiry, the extant literature discusses this topic with traditional lenses of selling effectiveness through the systematic process illustrated as optimization, market information processing, sequential progression and rationality (Banin *et al.*, 2016; Moncrief and Marshall, 2005). Moreover, previous research inclines salesforce creativity while analyzing different selling situations that allow salesforces to modify their selling approaches during customer interaction. This literature is unable to address the salesforces' aptitude to be spontaneous during unexpected circumstances.

5.2 Managerial Implications

The present study's findings offer important implications for practicing managers. First, we propose that CEOs and senior management create an environment that considers the standpoint of the salesforce's experience within an organization and their subjective perceptions of their selling tasks to complete the task successfully. Our study stimulates sales management to reconsider the impact of shared responsibility, as it may generate a synergy role in boosting employees' performance and innovation in selling approaches. Second, we also suggest in empowering the salesforce to transform tacit knowledge in some skills through experience, unarticulated knowledge and successful/unsuccessful selling processes and exchange it with their teammates to galvanize their selling abilities in uncertain and urgent situations during the sales conversation. This result stipulates evidence to the study of Spraggon and Bodolica (2017), which concluded that the exchange of tacit knowledge would generate new ideas among teammates and innovativeness in confronting unexpected sales-related concerns.

5.3 Limitations and future research directions

As with any research like ours, this study's contributions should be taken into consideration in light of the following limitations. First, we collected the data at one point in time, which makes this research a cross-sectional study, thus making it abstruse to reach a particular conclusion considering causal relationships. Second, the data was collected using convenience sampling with a reasonably large sample and response rate; we were still incapable of deciding whether the respondents provided truthful representation across industries. Third, future research should take one industry into consideration that may yield representative findings. The current understanding shows that spirituality is a multidimensional construct (2006), and it is essential to investigate the impact of each form of spirituality on task performance and IWB (Kinjerski and Skrypnek, 2006). Fourth, this research gives an important theoretical implication for both IWB and social loafing literature by conceptualizing that IWB not only triggers through spirituality and perceived identifiability but also through shared responsibility; hence, it is

vital to incorporate underlying assumptions in future research directions. Finally, the respondents were working in a B2B sales setting, which diminishes its external validity. Future research should investigate IWB in other industries and preferably in collectivistic societies to confirm our contradictory results.

5.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aims to determine the impact of spirituality, perceived identifiability and shared responsibility on task performance via the mediating role of IWB. Previous studies claimed that spirituality and perceived identifiability are positively linked with IWB and task performance, whereas shared responsibility is negatively associated with them. Inconsistent with social loafing theory and study hypotheses, we found that shared responsibility is relatively strongly related to task performance and IWB compared to spirituality and perceived identifiability.

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Appendix. Measuring instrument

Perceived Identifiability

1. My behavior as a group member were readily observable to others in the group.

2. Others in the group could not tell whether I was doing what I was supposed to do (R).

3. In the group, each member could tell whether other members were doing their fair share.

Shared Responsibility

1. The members of the group shared the responsibility for getting things done.

2. I felt personally responsible for the productivity of the group (R).

3. Members of the group sometimes didn't feel individually responsible for the performance of the group as a whole.

Spirit at Work

1. I experience a match between the requirements of my work and my values, beliefs and behaviors.

2. I am able to find meaning or purpose at work.

3. I am passionate about my work.

4. I am fulfilling my calling through my work.

5. I have a sense of personal mission in life, which my work helps me to fulfill.

6. I feel grateful to be involved in work like mine.

7. At the moment, I am right where I want to be at work.

8. At times, I experience a "high" at my work.

9. I have moments at work in which I have no sense of time or space.

10. At moments, I experience complete joy and ecstasy at work.

11. I experience moments at work where everything is blissful.

12. At times, I experience an energy or vitality at work that is difficult to describe.

13. My spiritual beliefs play an important role in everyday decisions that I make at work.

14. I receive inspiration or guidance from a Higher Power about my work.

15. I experience a connection with a greater source that has a positive effect on my work.

16. I feel like I am part of "a community" at work.

17. I experience a real sense of trust and personal connection with my coworkers.

18. I share a strong sense of purpose and meaning with my coworkers about our work.

Innovative Work Behavior

1. Creating new ideas for improvements.

2. Mobilizing support for innovative ideas.

3. Searching out new working methods, techniques or instruments.

4. Acquiring approval for innovative ideas.

5. Transforming innovative ideas into useful applications.

6. Generating original solutions to problems.

7. Introducing innovative ideas in a systematic way.

8. Making important organizational members enthusiastic for innovative ideas.

9. Thoroughly evaluating the application of innovate ideas.

Task Performance

1. This team member is superior to other team members that I've supervised before.

2. The overall level of performance that I have observed for this team member is outstanding.

3. My personal view of this team member is that he or she is very effective.
4. Overall, I feel that this team member has been effectively fulfilling his or her roles and responsibilities.
5. This team member praises other team members when they are successful.
6. This team member talks to other team members before taking actions that might affect them.
7. This team member says things to make others feel good about themselves or the team.
8. This team member encourages others to overcome their differences and get along.
9. This team member treats others fairly.
10. This team member helps others in the team without being asked.
11. This team member pays close attention to important details.

12. This team member works harder than necessary.
13. This team member asks for challenging assignments within the team.
14. This team member exercises personal discipline and self-control.
15. This team member takes the initiative to solve task-related problems.
16. This team member persists in overcoming obstacles to complete a task.
17. This team member tackles difficult work assignments enthusiastically.

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