

Ambidextrous Sales Force in the Electronic Performance Monitoring System: A Win-Win Situation Framework

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Abstract

In line with social exchange theory and the law of reciprocity, this research attempts to develop and analyse an exchange model in the electronic monitoring systems that can benefit sales subordinates and their managers working in the field. Using the quantitative method, dyadic data were collected from 265 sales subordinates and their 84 managers working in different companies. In this model, as an exchange relationship, sales subordinates show ambidextrous behaviour under the felt trust and quality LMX. Similarly, sales managers gain consistent performance and professional collaboration with their subordinates after establishing a trustworthy environment using the developmental EPM. This unique framework offers a win-win situation for managers and subordinates by suggesting a favourable linkage among study variables.

Keywords: *Salesforce, electronic performance monitoring system, LMX, ambidextrous behaviour.*

INTRODUCTION

For years, sales managers have been monitoring their sales subordinates during fieldwork. Understandably, managers cannot be with their subordinates when working in the field. Therefore, they have paid random visits to check their availability and work during field visits. Sales leaders' purpose is to achieve the sales targets of companies with the help of their frontline soldiers. However, sales workers lack their leaders' trust because of sales drops due to the market position or lack of ability to ambidextrous behaviour to perform steadily. Cascio (2000) argued that sales subordinates are usually geographically separated and work away from their manager. This geographical distance declines the belonging between them. However, despite physical separation, the connection between the manager and his subordinates can be

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retained through trust between both parties (Brower et al., 2000). Trust is a vital organ like the liver with similar characteristics as it can eliminate or reduce the effects of negative happenings in any relationship.

Sales leaders were already influential due to their organisational position, direct personal interaction, and crucial role in the salesforce's performance assessment (Rich, 1997). However, technological advancement adds further power to sales leader. How they assess and manage performance is the decisive factor for productive employees and the organisation's succession. By the execution of electronic performance monitoring (EPM), leaders are further benefited from a myriad of valuable facilities like communication services, productivity reports, performance measurement and improvement and others. Started with phone calls, the constant increase in technological monitoring is witnessed (Abraham et al., 2019). Back in 2007 around 78% organizations were using some form of EPM. This figure is potentially much higher now as technology's advancement has improved the capability to collect data (Tomczak et al., 2018). Today, leaders can track their subordinates' location and monitor their performance and wellbeing (Lucas et al., 2016).

Critics claim that the major issue with monitoring is that it makes a work environment characterised by low trust and unpleasant relationship (Lewis, 1999; Tomczak et al., 2018). But, it also has some negative consequences like stress (Davidson and Henderson, 2000) and perceived distrust and reduced job satisfaction (Kalischko and Riedl, 2021). Specifically, in the sales job, where key purpose is the promotion of products but workers take on location selfies and share in their WhatsApp Groups. In this case, committed field force can feel more pain after losing the trust and ultimately their commitment. Jeske & Santuzzi., (2015) argues that when employees react negatively to the EPM system, anticipated advantages might be diminished or even eliminated. It will be a lose-lose situation for both sales leaders and their subordinates.

Mostly, the reason behind the monitoring is the inconsistent performance of salesforce. Nowadays, salespeople are expected to behave like chameleons and adjust to several different circumstances and individuals without losing the focus: achieving sales goals, and maintaining strong perception and opinion (Giada Ruffoni, 2020). They specifically need to demonstrate ambidexterious behaviour for sales growth by selling higher quantities to existing customers or prospects to new customers (Agnihotri et al., 2017). Although the tendency to attain ambidexterity derives from the personal resource base, it is anticipated to be reinforced by the structure of HRM activities implemented by a company (Patel et al., 2013).

On the other hand, employees expect respect and trust from their managers (Ullrich et al., 2009) and they require dignity and freedom while working (Deci & Ryan, 2002). According to McNall & Roch, (2009), when EPM subordinates feel that they are being observed with honesty and honor by their manager, they may reciprocate by showing more trust in the manager. The raised trust level can possibly lead to LMX quality (Ashkanasy & Newcombe, 2001). Further, employees who experience LMX quality are able to meet challenges in completing their job objectives under monitoring (Audenaert et al., 2019). Ravid et al., (2020) in their systematic review anticipated if perceived as developmental, EPM purpose possibly can increase employees' motivation to advance an existing skill or learn a new one. Notably, ambidextrous salespeople refine and update their expertise, knowledge and skills in order to retain and build new clients (Aman et al., 2022).

The research makes numerous contributions to the body of literature already in existence.

- First, the research answers the calls from Ahmed et al., (2022) and Ravid et al., (2020) to examine developmental purpose of EPM to attain subordinates' ambidextrous behavior by involving them in exploitation and exploration.
- Second, prior study examining developmental EPM was limited to only attitudinal effects (Wells et al., 2007). This study contributes to the body of literature by identifying its behavioural outcomes i-e ambidextrous behaviour. This will improve understanding of the EPM's intended aim.
- Third, the study suggested sequential mediation of felt trust and high LMX quality in order to better capture subordinates' reactions once they perceive EPM as developmental. Hence, a thorough understanding of the underlying mechanisms between developmental EPM and ambidextrous behaviours can be attained with the help of sequential mediation.
- Fourth, this study is focused on the sales industry, where employees typically work away from their manager (Cascio, 2000). In the constant EPM system, salespeople can regularly meet sales goals by acting ambidextrously. Maintaining monitoring as developmental tool, this framework gives respect, trust and LMX quality to subordinates with the intention to get behavioral ambidexterity in return.
- Last, the study framework advances the social exchange theory (P. M. Blau, 1964) that asserts that how people interact positively in the exchange relationship to create a win-win situation.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT:

Developmental purpose of EPM and felt trust

The degree of trust a leader has in a subordinate cannot be known instantly (Lau et al., 2014). It is expected that feelings of trust or mistrust may arise after recognising situational and behavioural signs as a evidence of trust or a lack thereof (Campagna et al.,2020). Usually, monitoring is an indication of distrust and it is assumed that subordinates would perceive accordingly (Kalischko and Riedl, 2021). However, If an employee believes that EPM is intended to be developmental, they may believe that they are capable to invest time for development activities. According to Wells et al., (2007), EPM's perception as developmental may provide the message to the employees that you are respected and trusted. Hence, this research expects that EPM perceived as developmental can generate the trust feelings among subordinates. So, this research hypothesis that;

H1: Perceived developmental EPM leads to felt trust.

Felt trust and perceived LMX quality

According to Ullrich et al., (2009), subordinates greatly value respect and trust from their manager and company. Subordinates' felt trust reveals the perception of their managers' belief in them (Ergeneli et al., 2007). Dulebohn et al., (2012), described it as managers' inclination to improve the relationship with subordinates that will motivate motivates subordinates to participate in the social exchanges. Investigating the relationship between felt trust and LMX, Kim et al., (2018) and Lau et al., (2014) found it positive, whereas Baer et al., (2015) revealed

it negative. However, the possibility of having high-quality LMX is low without trust (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2008). According to Gill et al., (2019), felt trust promotes a more effective exchange relationship between two individuals. Therefore, we expect the positive relationship in the field of sales. Thus, we suggest,

H2: Felt trust leads to LMX quality.

Perceived LMX and ambidextrous behavior

Since, subordinates having high LMX relationship feel positive psychological environment. Hence, they have more tendency to engage in innovative work and discretionary practices by reciprocating positively (Saeed et al., 2018). According to Gu et al., (2015), in high-quality LMX relationships, subordinates are viewed as skilled and trustworthy. Hence, they receive extra resources essential to jobs in addition to relational support for the successful completion of assignments. Previously, studies in the context of sales have confirmed that a strong relationship between a manager and subordinates foster a psychological environment that supports salespeople's empowerment (Schermuly et al., 2013; Martin and Bush, 2006). In the study of Yu et al., (2013), sales-service ambidexterity resulted from the empowerment of followers through leadership style. Further, in the past, cross-functional teamwork, affiliation, and trust in the manager were characteristics that evidently led to individuals' ambidextrous behavior (Patterson et al., 2014; Van der Borgh et al., 2017; Yu et al., 2013). In light of this, we argue that sales subordinates' ambidextrous behaviour can be achieved by the quality of LMX. As a result, we suggest

H3(a): Perceived LMX quality leads to the ambidextrous behavior through exploitation.

H3(b): Perceived LMX quality leads to the ambidextrous behavior through exploration.

Mediation of felt trust between developmental purpose of EPM and perceived LMX quality

According to Liao & Chun, (2016), the positive opinions about leaders are crucial for creating high-quality LMX because they provide good feelings to subordinates in addition to belief of receiving future benefits from their leader. Using EPM as a developmental tool can lead to high LMX since it results in subordinates' positive opinions towards their manager. This impression provides the perception that their leaders trust them (Wells et al., 2007). The nature of relationship between manager and his subordinates is driven by the degree of trust a manager has in his subordinate (Seppälä et al., 2011). Bernstrøm & Svare, (2017) identified trust as an underlying explaining mechanism between diverse organizational actions and employees' outcomes. In the existing literature, felt trust has received substantial support as a mediator. Prior, Falk & Kosfeld (2006) found felt trust as mediating mechanism between monitoring and intrinsic motivation. Later, Bernstrøm & Svare, (2017) revealed the fully mediating linkage between monitoring and mastery and monitoring and intrinsic motivation. Hence, this research anticipates,

H4: Felt trust mediates the relationship between perceived developmental purpose of EPM and LMX quality.

Mediation of Perceived LMX quality between felt trust and ambidextrous behavior

According to Zheng et al., (2019) feelings of trust boost subordinates' confidence in their ability to carry out tasks, which results in success and other positive behavior. From the perspective of social exchange, trusted individuals have feelings of obligation to retain trust by enhanced performance (Lau et al., 2014). Similarly, the signal of LMX reflects a certain kind of social exchange inside the company (Chen & Wei, 2020) that can possibly be the underlying mechanism because of psychological influence exerted by a leader. In line with the social exchange principle, subordinates may become liable to positive exchanges created by leaders' positive behaviors. This positive exchange makes subordinates feel better on several aspects, including control over organisational resources, consideration, trust and competence (Li et al., 2012). In the study of Byun et al., (2017), perceived LMX mediated the relationship between the leader's trust and subordinate's task performance. Drawing on the social exchange theory, we expect that perceived LMX can be a possible underlying mechanism between the felt trust and ambidextrous behavior. The research proposes,

H5(a): Perceived LMX quality mediates the relationship between felt trust and ambidextrous behavior by engagement in exploitation.

H5(b): Perceived LMX quality mediates the relationship between felt trust and ambidextrous behavior by engagement in exploration.

Sequential mediation of felt trust and LMX quality between developmental EPM and ambidextrous behavior

Developmental EPM signals subordinates of being trustworthy to perceive LMX quality subsequent to engagement in ambidextrous behavior. In the modern era of workplace relationship, both parties must satisfy from their gains in order to complete a deal under the social exchange law of reciprocity (Chernyak-Hai, & Rabenu, 2018). Additionally, obligations in social exchange relationships may be implicit. Therefore, trust and good relations are imperative to endure the relationship (Shanka, & Buvik, 2019). According to Zheng et al., (2019), if subordinates feel they have the leader's trust, they are more likely to accept his or her authority. Competent subordinates have more chance to develop greater LMX with their superiors, whereas those who are thought to be incompetent are anticipated to keep a lower LMX standard. Whenever the quality of LMX is better than when it is weaker, they display more desired behaviours, such as superior performance, as subordinates want to reciprocate to the manager's excellent relationship (Furnes et al., 2015). Following these arguments, this research anticipates the sequential mediation of felt trust and LMX in relation to DEPM and ambidextrous behavior. Hence, we propose,

H6(a): Felt trust and perceived LMX sequentially mediate the relationship between DEPM and ambidextrous behavior through exploitation.

H6(b): Felt trust and perceived LMX sequentially mediate the relationship between DEPM and ambidextrous behavior through exploration.

DEPM and ambidextrous behavior through exploration.

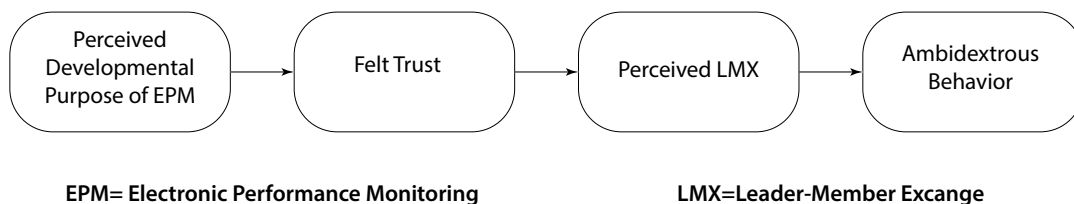


Figure 1: Research Model

METHODOLOGY

Data collection and sampling

The research used dyadic data collected from sales representatives and their managers. First author visited distribution offices located in two cities Sukkur and Larkana as per convenience. Considering the nature of job and schedule of sales people, data from sales representative and their managers were taken at the same point of time. This also helped later in matching the data by assigning codes. Each sales representative rated developmental purpose of EPM, felt trust and LMX. However, their ambidextrous behavior was assessed by their line managers. There was minimum two and maximum five representatives working under a manager. Total 265 useable responses were received from sales representatives working under 84 managers with a response rate of 44%.

Measures

Developmental purpose of EPM:

The research measured developmental purpose of EPM with the scale developed by (Wells et al., 2007). The sample item of the scale is “The company uses the call monitoring system to point out areas of my performance that need improvement.” The Cronbach's Alpha of scale in this study is 0.897.

Felt trust:

To measure felt trust, the research utilized the scale developed by (Bernstrøm & Svare, 2017). One of the item is “Management trusts that I am doing the best I can” This research reported Cronbach’s Alpha 0.899 in this scale.

Leader-member exchange quality:

The research measured LMX by using the scale developed by Graen & Uhl-Bien., (1995b). This scale assesses how employees believe their managers are and the extent to get support from their managers. The Cronbach's Alpha in this study is 0.894.

Ambidextrous behavior:

The study used the ambidexterity scale developed by Mom et al.,(2007). There were six items for exploitation and five items for exploration. The sample items are “Last month, this sales representative engaged in searching for new possibilities with respect to his work” for

explorative behaviours and “Last month, this sales representative engaged in activities he could properly conduct using his existing knowledge” for exploitative behaviors. The Cronbach's Alpha for exploitation and exploration are 0.889 and 0.865 respectively.

Common method bias

As a preventive measure of common-method bias, this study used dyadic data since ambidextrous behaviour of sales representatives was rated by their managers. Further, to detect any common method variance, the researchers performed Harman's single factor test and found satisfactory value below .5 (Rodríguez-Ardura and Meseguer-Artola, 2020).

Descriptive Statistics

The study performed descriptive statistics to report the demographic and employment profile of respondents. Table I displays the required profile of sales representatives in the final sample. There are limited females working in the sales field so it counts 2% in this study. Most of the sales representatives were under the age of 30. There were few representatives having academic qualification below intermediate. However, 38% of sales representatives passed of 1-4 years in the sales field.

Table 1: Respondents' profile

Sales representatives profile		n (265)
Gender	Male	97.7%
	Female	2.3%
Marital Status	Single	26.8%
	Married	73.2%
Age	Below 30 years	58.1%
	31-40	28.6%
	41-50	13.3%
Education Qualification	Below Intermediate	6%
	Intermediate	14.3%
	Graduation	54.2%
	Masters	25.5%
Experience	Less than 1 year	10.5%
	Above 1 to 4 years	38.3%
	Above 4 -7 years	23.8%
	Above 7 years	27.4%

Measurement Model

To confirm the measurement model, composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, convergent and discriminant validity were assessed. The Cronbach's alpha numbers presented in Table II are in the range of 0.865 to 0.899. Composite reliability measures are higher than the required values .70. Following the recommendation of Hair et al., (2017), we assessed the convergent validity by evaluating indicators outer loadings and average variance extracted (AVE) values. All the items are retained after confirming satisfactory values displayed in Table II. Further, to ensure discriminant validity, the research used Fornell Lackner criterion as suggested by Hilkenmeier et al. (2020). The research also checked multicollinearity between the indicators

before evaluating the structural model.

Table 2: Convergent validity

Factors	Items	Factor loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
DEPM	DEPM1	0.896	0.897	0.936	0.829
	DEPM2	0.928			
	DEPM3	0.907			
EXPLOITATION	EXPLOI1	0.751	0.889	0.916	0.645
	EXPLOI2	0.861			
	EXPLOI3	0.701			
	EXPLOI4	0.857			
	EXPLOI5	0.845			
	EXPLOI6	0.790			
EXPLORATION	EXPLOR1	0.851	0.865	0.902	0.769
	EXPLOR2	0.842			
	EXPLOR3	0.799			
	EXPLOR4	0.790			
	EXPLOR5	0.742			
FELT TRUST	FT1	0.796	0.899	0.930	0.769
	FT2	0.898			
	FT3	0.883			
	FT4	0.925			
LMX	LMX1	0.620	0.894	0.918	0.617
	LMX2	0.836			
	LMX3	0.649			
	LMX4	0.832			
	LMX5	0.825			
	LMX6	0.827			
	LMX7	0.872			

Table 3: Discriminant validity

Factors	DEPM	EXPLOITATION	EXPLORATION	FELT TRUST	LMX
DEPM	0.911				
EXPLOITATION	0.342	0.803			
EXPLORATION	0.410	0.772	0.806		
FELT TRUST	0.247	0.529	0.499	0.877	
LMX	0.416	0.491	0.542	0.429	0.786

Structural Model Assessment

To test the direct and indirect relations between the constructs, the research performed structural equation modelling preferring Smart pls and each hypothesised relationship was tested using PLS path examination as demonstrated in figure 2. The study preferred PLS-SEM since it estimates the complete structural model relationship in a single analysis (Sarstedt et al., 2020). Specifically, it becomes a superior method in examining mediational effects. Since,

there are three mediational models hence each mediation proposed in the research was verified using PLS path examination.

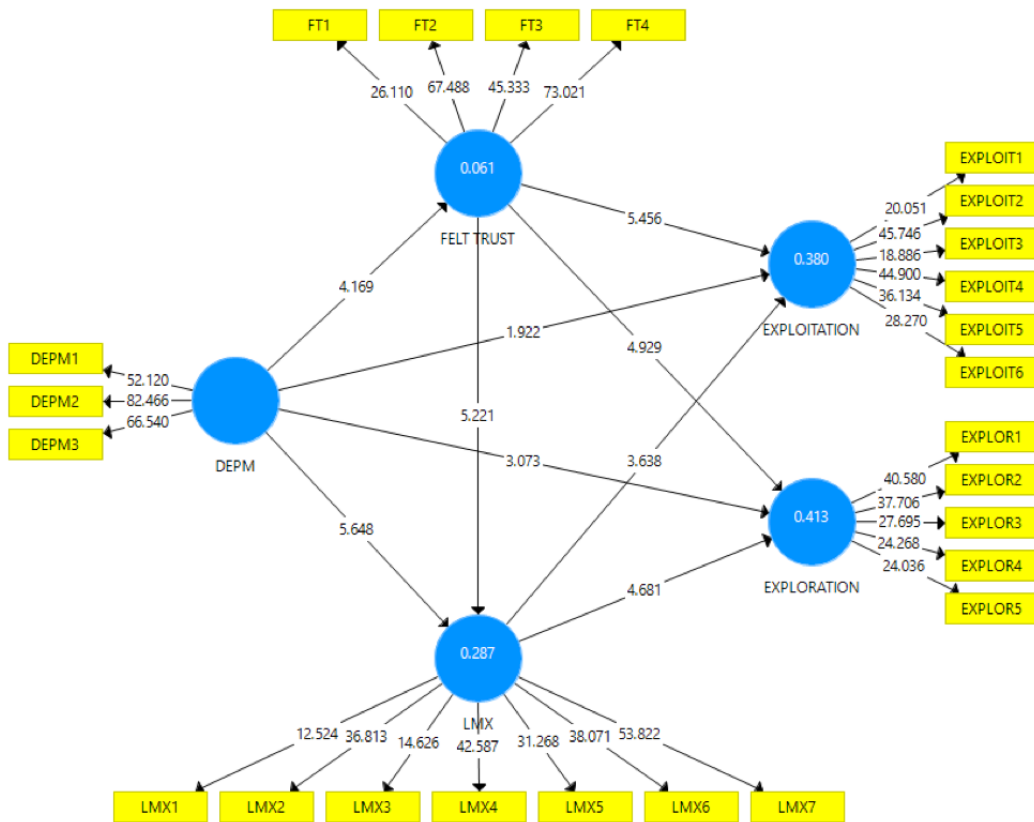


Figure 2:

Direct relationships

The result of direct relations in this study are revealed in Table IV. In H1, the research proposed that DEPM leads to felt trust. The results ($\beta = 0.247, p < 0.000$) confirm significant relationship between DPEM and felt trust. The direct effect of felt test on LMX was proposed in H2. The impact of felt trust on LMX was found to be supported in figures ($\beta = 0.348, p < 0.000$). It was proposed in H3, that LMX is having a positive relationship with sales representatives' ambidextrous behaviors through exploitation and exploration. This relationship is validated through figures ($\beta = 0.271, p < 0.000$) and ($\beta = 0.327, p < 0.000$) respectively. Thus, the proposed hypotheses about direct relationships were found to be supported.

Table 4: Direct effects

Direct Relationships	β	(STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values	Hypothesis	Decision
DEPM -> FELT TRUST	0.247	0.059	4.169	0.000	H1	Supported
FELT TRUST-> LMX	0.348	0.067	5.221	0.000	H2	Supported
LMX-> EXPLOITATION	0.271	0.075	3.638	0.000	H3(a)	Supported
LMX-> EXPLOARTION	0.327	0.070	4.681	0.000	H3(b)	Supported
DEPM-> EXPLOITATION	0.134	0.071	1.922	0.055		Not Supported
DEPM-> EXPLORATION	0.197	0.064	3.073	0.002		Supported

Mediating relationships

The research followed the suggestions of Preacher & Hayes (2008) by performing the method of complete bootstrap confidence with 5000 subsamples and with a maximum of 2,000 iterations. This research assessed each mediation model separately similarly to Klärner et al., (2013) performed in their study. The outcomes ($\beta = 0.087$, $p < 0.000$) of the first mediator felt trust between DEPM and LMX revealed the partial mediation as the direct effect remained significant. In the H5, this research hypothesized LMX as mediator between felt trust and ambidextrous behavior through exploitation (Ha) and exploration (Hb). As anticipated, the results for exploitation ($\beta = 0.139$, $p < 0.000$) and for exploration ($\beta = 0.173$, $p < 0.000$) validated the partial mediation of LMX. According to H6, this research anticipated the sequential mediation of felt trust and LMX between Developmental EPM and ambidextrous behavior through exploitation (H6a) and exploration (H6b). The numbers ($\beta = 0.023$, $p < 0.004$) for exploitation and ($\beta = 0.028$, $p < 0.001$) for exploration supported the sequential mediation. The direct link between DEPM and exploitation also found insignificant in numbers ($\beta = 0.134$, $p < 0.055$) confirming full sequential mediation. However, the direct link between DEPM and exploration didn't turn insignificant demonstrating partial serial mediation.

Table 5: Mediating effects

Mediating relationships	(β)	(STDEV)	T Stat	P Values	Hypotheses	Decision
DEPM -> FELT TRUST-> LMX	0.087	0.024	3.593	0.000	H4	Supported
FELT TRUST->LMX->EXPLOITATION	0.139	0.031	4.419	0.000	H5(a)	Supported
FELT TRUST->LMX->EXPLORATION	0.173	0.034	5.137	0.000	H5(b)	Supported
DEPM -> FELT TRUST-> LMX->EXPLOITATION	0.023	0.008	2.870	0.004	H6(a)	Supported
DEPM -> FELT TRUST-> LMX->EXPLORATION	0.028	0.009	3.286	0.001	H6(b)	Supported

Further, R^2 values are revealed in the Table VI. It indicates that DEPM, Felt trust, and LMX are likely to explain 3.80% (Exploitation) and 4.13% (Exploration) of the variance on ambidextrous behavior. According to the criterion of Hair et al.,(2019), the research demonstrated substantial figures for LMX, Exploitation and Exploration.

Table 6: R-squared

	R-square
EXPLOITATION	0.380
EXPLORATION	0.413
FELT TRUST	0.061
LMX	0.287

DISCUSSION

Sales leaders have remained in power because of organizational position, performance assessment, and direct personal interaction with the salesforce (Wieseke et al., 2008). EPM has given leaders more power because it allows them to continuously monitor their employees. However, a big concern with monitoring is that it creates work culture with reduced trust and unhappy relationships at work (Lewis, 1999; Tomczak et al., 2018). The low trust and unhappy

relationships at work can impair subordinates' performance. This is a convincing point in favour of monitoring as a developmental tool rather than a deterrent. This serves as the opening of our social exchange model based on law of reciprocity. We have proposed in H1 that when subordinates get the developmental EPM, it will lead to feelings of trust. Similar to earlier research, this study found felt trust as the outcome to perceived DEPM. Previously, there was conflicting evidence of relationship between felt trust and LMX. Studies of Lau et al., (2014) and Kim et al., (2018) found positive whereas Baer et al., (2015), found this relationship negative. However, this research showed positive relationship in the sales representatives working in the field. According to Chiu & Chiang, (2019), in the relationship between leader and subordinate, trust has the ability to bring subordinates' positive behaviour towards leader and leads to the quality of exchange relationship and career satisfaction (Han, 2010). We proposed in H3 that LMX may bring subordinates' ambidextrous behaviour through exploitation and exploration activities. In the study of Gu et al., (2015), LMX led to positive outcomes like efficient execution of assignments and creativity. In this research ambidextrous behavior resulted from perceived LMX quality.

Further, the research purposed to access three mediational effects. In the first mediation model proposed in H4, Felt trust happened to be the underlying process through which DEPM positively affected LMX. This research study found felt trust as partial mediator and confirmed the direct relationship between DEPM and LMX. In the second mediation model, the study theorized LMX as the mediating mechanism in relation to felt trust and ambidextrous behavior by doing exploitation and exploration activities (H5a & b). Lau et al., (2014) proposed that feeling of trust has the ability to make individuals more responsible and obligatory to perform roles and tasks for the trustors. The findings confirm that LMX is the process provoked in the presence of felt trust to stimulate ambidextrous behavior of sales representative through exploitation and exploration.

In the serial mediation model, we proposed that sales subordinates receiving EPM as developmental feel trust which then gives the impression of LMX to achieve ambidextrous behavior by doing exploitation and exploration activities. Social exchange theory (P. M. Blau, 1964) posits that positive leadership behaviours may lead to positive exchanges by building liabilities among followers. The research found sequential mediation of felt trust and LMX in relation to DEPM and ambidextrous behavior. The outcomes support the social exchange framework proposed by McNall & Roch (2009) on how employees respond to DEPM. The theory of social exchange supports the full interaction of the variables (Blau, 1964) where sales representatives feeling the trust and LMX, display ambidextrous behaviour when DEPM is perceived.

Theoretical and practical Contributions

The research strengthens the theory of social exchange by offering a fresh and applicable idea in the sales industry. Depending on reciprocity, this research model depicts a favourable relationship between developmental purpose of EPM and ambidextrous behavior through the sequential mediation of felt trust and perceived LMX quality. Prior research on EPM's developmental purpose had only looked at attitudinal consequences (Wells et al., 2007). Adding to body of knowledge, we enhanced the understanding of developmental purpose of EPM by investigating its behavioral effects in the shape of exploitation and exploration. By offering win-

win situation for subordinates and their managers, this proposed framework is anticipated to be properly positioned in scholarly work.

Sales managers must value their employees' respect in the electronic performance monitoring system. Some organisational aspects might motivate managers to keep an eye on subordinates. However, the deterrent should not be the goal but it should be development. This is logical in many ways. First and foremost, morally, it is correct. Second, numerous studies have demonstrated that employees under EPM monitoring experience higher levels of stress than employees under other types of observation (Kalischko and Riedl, 2021). If employees have a negative answer to the EPM system, the anticipated benefits of monitoring can be minimized or eliminated (Jeske & Santuzzi, 2015). Third, it outlines the significance of trust in the working relationship. Considering that employees are unable to immediately determine how much their manager trusts them, the feeling of trust is based on behavioural and environmental cues interpreted as indications of trust or a lack thereof (Kim et al., 2018). DEPM may lead subordinates to the feeling of trust of their manager. Having a feeling of trust is especially important for salespeople because they work remotely and remain physically separated from their manager. The physical separation between sales leaders and employees may reduce a sense of belonging (Cascio, 2000). Since, trust is regarded as the most important component of every successful business partnership (Kramer, 1999), subordinates perceive the high LMX quality with their managers.

Additionally, felt trust is crucial for many beneficial organisational and individual outcomes, including job performance, organizational citizenship behavior, less intention to leave, job satisfaction, trust in the manager and psychological empowerment (Brower et al., 2009; Gill et al., 2019; Lester & Brower, 2003). Furthermore, in order to successfully implement the organisational tactic of selling both new and existing items, salesforce play a crucial role (Agnihotri et al., 2017). So, the ambidextrous behavior may be the chief feature for organizational leaders. If they desire their employees to sell both new and existing products, they may accomplish this by executing developmental EPM to enhance exchange relationships.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

This research offers a novel framework but it is not without few limitations. First, we were only able to examine one positive aspect of EPM; developmental purpose of EPM. However, it can be deterrent as well (Wells et al., 2007). According to the theory of social exchange (P. M. Blau, 1964), subordinates will be less likely to engage in social exchange if their company becomes less keen to contribute to such relationships. This research releases a call for future researchers to investigate the behavioral effects of deterrent EPM. Second, the research suggests to examine psychological contract as a boundary condition between perceived EPM and subordinates' behavioral ambidexterity. Third, this study is limited to LMX rated by subordinates only. Future studies have opportunity to look at how LMX is perceived by leaders and subordinates simultaneously. Finally, this research model is specifically designed for the sales industry where subordinates work away from their managers. Future studies can apply a similar approach to other industries, particularly banking, where monitoring is more prevalent and trust and exchange relationships are significant.

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