

## It is All About Me: Antecedents and Consequences of Salesperson Lone Wolf Tendencies

By David A. Locander, Louis J. Zmich, and William B. Locander

This study contributes to our understanding of Lone Wolf Tendencies (LWT) and its workplace outcomes. In doing so, this research explores two potential antecedents to LWT, sensation-seeking and narcissism, with two organizational outcomes, job satisfaction, and job performance. Results from a structural equation model using a sample of 315 B2B salespeople demonstrate a significant and positive relationship between narcissism and LWT. Additionally, LWT is shown to have a negative direct effect on job satisfaction and a negative indirect effect on job performance. Implications for managers and researchers are discussed.

Popularized in the bestselling book *The Challenger Sale* by Matthew Dixon and Brent Adamson, lone wolf tendencies within salespeople have garnered interest by practitioners and academics. Past sales research identifies Lone Wolf Tendencies (LWT) as a psychological state in which individuals prefer to make their own decisions and work alone (Dixon, Gassenheimer, and Barr, 2003). Lone Wolves salespeople are the self-confident, rule-breaking “cowboys” of the sales force who do things “their way” and are difficult to manage (Dixon and Adamson, 2011, p. 20). Dixon and Adamson quote a head of sales saying, “I’d fire them if I could, but I can’t, because they’re all crushing their numbers” (2011, p.20). While Lone Wolf salespeople may be difficult to manage, past research shows that LWT salespeople are hardworking and among the top performers in their company (Dixon and Adamson, 2011; Ingram, Lee, and Lucas 1991). Given this conflict, this research provides a better understanding of the underlying intra-individual psychological traits that may foster LWT and its outcomes. While Lone Wolf salespeople may have been successful in the past, their unwillingness to work with others may put this success in jeopardy due to the changing relationships between B2B sales organizations and their customers (CSO Insights, 2018).

---

**David A. Locander** (DBA, Louisiana Tech University), UC Foundation Assistant Professor, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, david-locander@utc.edu

**Louis J. Zmich** Doctoral Candidate at Louisiana Tech University, ljz001@latech.edu

**William B. Locander** (PhD, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign), Max P. Watson, Jr. Professor, Louisiana Tech University, Locander@latech.edu

Recent studies highlight a growing gap between B2B salespeople and their buyers’ needs (Matias, 2018; CSO Insights, 2018; Gartner, 2019). This buyer-seller gap may be due to B2B buyers being more knowledgeable, requiring more transparency, and needing customized product offerings (Cicala, Bush, Serrell, and Deitz, 2014; Rodriguez and Boyer, 2016; Pullins, Sharkey, Pham, and Shultz, 2020). To address these issues, sales organizations are transforming themselves to more collaborative selling approaches (Pullins et al., 2020; Dixon et al., 2003) that require numerous interactions across several functional areas of an organization (Kahn, 2009). While companies attempt to meet these changes by becoming more customer-centric and moving toward collaborative selling approaches, it is the individual salesperson who must put these plans into action. As the business environment changes to a collective selling model, lone wolf salespeople may find themselves in a compromised position. On the one hand, lone wolves are highly involved in their job and love selling, and on the other, they have an aversion to working with others and prefer to do things their way (Ingram et al., 1991; Mulki, Jaramillo, and Marshall; 2007; Briggs, Jaramillo, and Weeks, 2012; Dixon et al., 2003; Locander, Weinberg, Mulki, and Locander, 2015). Thus, the present research examines a potential hindrance that may affect sales organizational success, Lone Wolf Tendencies.

In order to better understand LWT, this research examines two potential psychological antecedents to LWT, narcissism and sensation-seeking, while also exploring LWT’s impact on job performance and job

satisfaction. This research will help practitioners and academics to better understand the intra-individual psychological makeup of lone wolves. In addition, this research also provides some insight into why cooperativeness and collaboration within the sales force is one of the biggest challenges facing sales managers (Ulaga and Loveland, 2013). Additionally, this study answers the call for more research on identifying characteristics related to LWT (Locander et al., 2015).

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **Lone Wolf Tendencies**

Lone Wolf Tendency (LWT) is defined as “a psychological state in which one prefers to work alone when making decisions and setting/accomplishing priorities and goals” (Dixon et al., 2003, p.205). Lone wolves thrive on doing their own thing and are disdainful of others who do not measure up to their standards (Ingram et al., 1991). Lone wolves tend to be psychologically detached from their firm and display a “wanderlust” by surveying the job market for other sales positions (Griffeth, Gaertner, and Sager, 1999). However, LWT individuals are highly involved in their work and are task completion-focused, which may be a double-edged sword. For sales organizations, where job responsibilities do not require teamwork, lone wolves may thrive with the appropriate autonomy (Locander et al., 2015). In contrast, salespeople, whose job duties require team selling, may not perform up to expectations due to a lack of trust in others and their preference for working alone (Dixon et al., 2003). Lone wolves tend to be indifferent to their organizations’ broader goals but are devoted to their jobs and love selling (Ingram, 1996; Mulki et al., 2007). Thus, LWT suggests a personality type that centers around enhancing one’s self-image while showing little interest in coworkers’ opinions and welfare.

While the above discussion paints a somewhat negative portrait of lone wolves, they are neither bad people nor unproductive (Dixon et al., 2003). LWT salespeople have been associated as being highly involved in their job and possess great self-confidence, energy, and dedication, leading to productivity (Griffeth et al., 1999; Ingram et al., 1991). Prior conceptualizations focus on LWT as

an inherent predisposition, a function of an individual’s nature (Ingram et al., 1991; Mulki et al., 2007; Dixon et al., 2003). However, Locander and colleagues (2015) propose a nurture conceptualization that may, in part, foster LWT. That is, they find that “LWT may come about, at least in part, through workplace interactions. Results confirm our expectations that social interactions contribute to the nurturing of LWT such that low levels of career mentoring and social comparison behaviors at work are likely to bring about a propensity for LWT” (p. 362). While the current research focuses on the intra-individual antecedents of LWT and their outcomes, it is important to note that researchers are beginning to look at contextual forces that may foster LWT.

### **Sensation-Seeking**

Sensation-seeking is a personality trait defined as behaving and experiencing feelings that are varied, novel, complex, intense, and risky for the pleasure of the experience (Zuckerman, 2009; Masson, Lamoureux, and De Guise, 2020). Sensation seekers require a lot of stimulation, and when not present, they feel that the experience is unpleasant (Larsen and Buss, 2005). Sensations such as wild parties, parachute jumping, and breaking the rules characterize the types of behaviors that excite sensation seekers driven by the intensity of an experience itself and the personal attention garnered by their achievement (Horvath and Zuckerman, 1993; Stanforth, 1995). While there is little empirical research addressing salespeople and sensation-seeking, Zuckerman (1994) notes that individuals who are sensation seekers may be well suited for sales jobs:

“High sensation seekers are best suited for jobs where there are varied activities and challenges... Jobs like those in the helping profession, sales work, and journalism, where there are constantly changing interpersonal challenge, are good for high sensation seekers.” (Zuckerman, 1994, p. 176)

While sensation seekers may be drawn to sales as a profession because of its challenges, sensations are still an internal and individualist feeling. It is the internal desire for a thrill that drives sensation seeking, which may foster LWT. Sensation seekers and lone wolves are highly confident, seek self-fulfillment from achievement and recognition from others (Sheaffer and Brender-

Ilan, 2014; Carter, 2019; Zuckerman, 2009). It seems reasonable that the “sensation of making a sale” and the thrill of achieving personal recognition may encourage LWT. Accordingly, the sensation of sales encounters, driven by the associated risks and potential rewards at stake, may be associated with LWT. Thus H1,

*Hypothesis 1: Sensation-Seeking is positively related to lone wolf tendency.*

## **Narcissism**

Narcissism has received limited attention within the sales literature, which is surprising, as narcissists may be attracted to sales positions due to the job autonomy, compensation, and competitive nature (Soyer, Rovenpor, and Kopelman, 1999; Smith, 2017). Narcissistic personality is a condition where a person holds an exaggerated sense of self-importance (Murray, 1938) and are driven by “a grandiose, yet vulnerable self-concept” (Morf and Rhodewalt, 2001, p.178). Narcissistic individuals lack empathy, are exploitative, and are selfish (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro, and Rusbult, 2004; O’Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, and McDaniel, 2012; Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, and Elliot, 2000). While on the surface narcissism seems straight forward, there is another side to narcissists that is “charming, charismatic, confident, interpersonally skilled, entertaining, assertive, gregarious, bold, extroverted, and attractive to others” (Smith, 2017, p. 2). This continuum has led some researchers to describe narcissism as the “good and bad”, “healthy and destructive”, and “bright and dark” sides of narcissism (Back, Küfner, Dufner, Gerlach, Rauthmann, and Denissen, 2013; Malkin, 2015; Lubit, 2002; Smith, 2017).

While past research has examined the duality of narcissism, it is the way narcissists view relationships that may be concerning for sales managers. While narcissists may be charming and interpersonally skilled, they lack empathy and are exploitative (Sedikides et al., 2004; O’Boyle et al., 2012; Campbell et al., 2000) which can hinder the development of relationships. Their exaggerated sense of self-worth requires constant affirmation and reinforcement of their self-concept (Braun, 2017). The paradox of narcissists is that their need for personal affirmation

from others goes unsatisfied because they tend to ignore others which damage relationships with them (Braun, 2017). Narcissists may also have abrasive and antagonistic personalities, which impede building personal relationships (Rhodewalt and Morf, 1995). Their behavior may exhibit inconsistencies ranging from grandiosity to vulnerability (Pincus, Cain and Wright, 2014). Ironically, narcissists’ disregard for others creates a tension between their need for approval and their desire for recognition from others (Pincus et al., 2014; Braun, 2017).

The narcissistic salesperson has the potential to not only negatively affect their sales organization but also may degrade customer relationships (Smith, 2017). Narcissistic salespeople may go as far as to display deviant work behaviors and are likely to deflect blame on others (Jelinek and Ahearne, 2006). Narcissists, like lone wolves, have low regard for others which inhibits their ability to trust (Bettencourt, Talley, Benhamin, and Valentine, 2006; Dixon et al., 2003). Not trusting others leads lone wolves to prefer working alone. Therefore, individuals who display narcissistic tendencies will likely also engage in lone wolfism. Thus, H2:

*Hypothesis 2: Narcissism is positively related to lone wolf tendency.*

## **Job Performance and Job Satisfaction**

The literature with respect to the relationship between LWT and job performance is open to question. Some studies focus on lone wolves’ negative characteristics (e.g., Ingram et al., 1991; Briggs et al., 2012; Mulki et al., 2007). Other studies find positive workplace outcomes, including task performance, innovativeness, dedication, and identification with their jobs (e.g., Griffeth et al., 1999; Ingram, 1996). However, LWT and job performance have produced little empirical data linking the two constructs (Briggs et al., 2012). Mulki et al. (2007) did not find a significant correlation between LWT and task performance. Given the changing nature of the selling environment to more cooperative and collective efforts (Dixon et al., 2003), it is reasonable to assume that LWTs will negatively affect job performance. Thus H3:

*Hypothesis 3: Lone wolf tendency is negatively related to job performance.*

Job satisfaction is defined as “all characteristics of the job and the work environment that the salesperson finds rewarding, fulfilling, or satisfying” (Churchill, Ford, and Walker, 1974, p. 255). Past research identifies key antecedents to salesperson job satisfaction (e.g., role-conflict, role ambiguity, work-family conflict, organizational support, emotional exhaustion, etc.) (e.g., Rutherford, Marshall, and Park, 2014). While research on salesperson satisfaction is abundant, researchers have yet to test the direct relationship of LWT to job satisfaction. While some studies include LWT and satisfaction in the same model, the direct relationship is not tested (Briggs et al., 2012; Mulki et al., 2007). Therefore, this research looks to expand our understanding of LWT on organizational outcomes.

Lone wolves are described as devoted, highly involved and have a love for selling (Ingram, 1996; Griffeth et al., 1999; Locander et al., 2015), but past research also identifies that they tend to be indifferent to organizational goals and lack a psychological attachment to their firm (Mulki et al., 2007; Dixon et al., 2003). This lack of commitment is evident as lone wolves are always on the lookout for another job and enjoy the job search process (Griffeth et al., 1999). The lack of organizational commitment and the temptation of a new job leads one to question lone wolves' job satisfaction level. Additionally, lone wolves may be negatively affected by sales organizations shifting away from the individual to more collaborative/team selling approaches. As such, the level of discomfort with a change away from the status quo may affect job satisfaction. Thus H4,

*Hypothesis 4: Lone wolf tendency is negatively related to job satisfaction.*

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Sample**

The sample consists of currently employed U.S. business-to-business salespeople and was obtained from a professionally managed online panel contracted through Qualtrics. Prospective respondents undertook a series of screening rounds to ensure a representative sample. A panel project manager was hired to increase objectivity in selecting and screening respondents

and cleaning the initial data set (Babin, Griffin, and Hair, 2016). This resulted in a sample of 315 B2B salespeople. Respondents ranged in age from 20 to 73 ( $\mu = 42.46$ ,  $\sigma = 12.89$ ). Fifty-eight percent were male (183/315). Total B2B selling experience ranged from 1 to 34 years ( $\mu=7.36$ ,  $\sigma=7.28$ ).

### **Measures**

All constructs are measured using existing validated instruments on a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly agreed to strongly disagree. Sensation-Seeking is measured using four items developed by Stephenson Velez, Chalela, Ramirez, and Hoyle (2007). Narcissism is measured using four items developed by Hendin and Cheek (1997). Lone wolf is measured using five items developed by Dixon et al. (2003). Job satisfaction is measured with five items developed by Bagozzi (1980). Finally, job performance is measured using eight items by Piercy, Cravens, and Lane (2001). In line with prior research in this area, the control variables included in this study are age, tenure, and biological sex (e.g., Groza et al., 2016).

### **Results**

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS 27 assessed the reliability and validity of the constructs of interest for inclusion in our conceptual model. The results indicate good model fit:  $\chi^2 = 598.2$ ,  $df = 293$ ,  $p < .001$ ; comparative fit index (CFI) = .93; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .058; Table 1 presents standardized factor loadings for each scale item, construct reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) for the measurement model. All construct reliabilities exceed .70, supporting internal reliability (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2010). Discriminant validity is assessed by comparing the average variance extracted (AVE) estimates for each factor with the squared interconstruct correlations (SIC) associated with that factor. All average variance extracted (AVE) are greater than the squared interconstruct correlations, demonstrating acceptable discriminant validity. The correlation matrix and descriptive statistics are presented in Table 2.

**Table 1: Scale Items and Measurement Properties**

Narcissism	Factor Loadings	AVE	CR
My feelings are easily hurt by ridicule or by the slighting remarks of others.	.73	.51	.80
I dislike sharing the credit of an achievement with others.	.73		
I dislike being with a group unless I know that I am appreciated by at one of those present.	.60		
I feel that I am temperamentally different from most people.	.78		
Sensation-seeking			
I like to do frightening things.	.82	.48	.74
I would like to try parachute-jumping.	.70		
I like wild parties.	.56		
I like new and exciting experiences, even if I have to break the rules.	.67		
Lone wolf			
Given a choice, I would rather work alone than work with others.	.79	.52	.84
At work, I prefer solitude over social interaction with work colleagues.	.74		
I am more successful when I work by myself than with others.	.82		
For me, working with others poses a threat to my success.	.58		
Working with others is a hassle.	.67		
Job Performance			
Building effective relationships with customers	.82	.66	.94
Making effective presentations to customers	.87		
Keeping expenses at acceptable levels	.63		
Achieving sales targets and other business objectives	.84		
Understanding our products and services	.89		
Providing feedback to management	.76		
Understanding customer needs and work processes	.87		
Contributing to my sales unit's revenues	.82		
Job Satisfaction			
I would advise a friend looking for a new job to take one similar to mine.	.63	.51	.84
I am satisfied with my general work situation.	.84		
I feel it is easy to demonstrate my ability and initiative in my job.	.72		
I think that there is as much a feeling of security in my job as in other jobs.	.65		
I find my work challenging, exciting, and it gives me a sense of accomplishment.	.72		

**Table 2: Correlation Matrix and Descriptive Statistics**

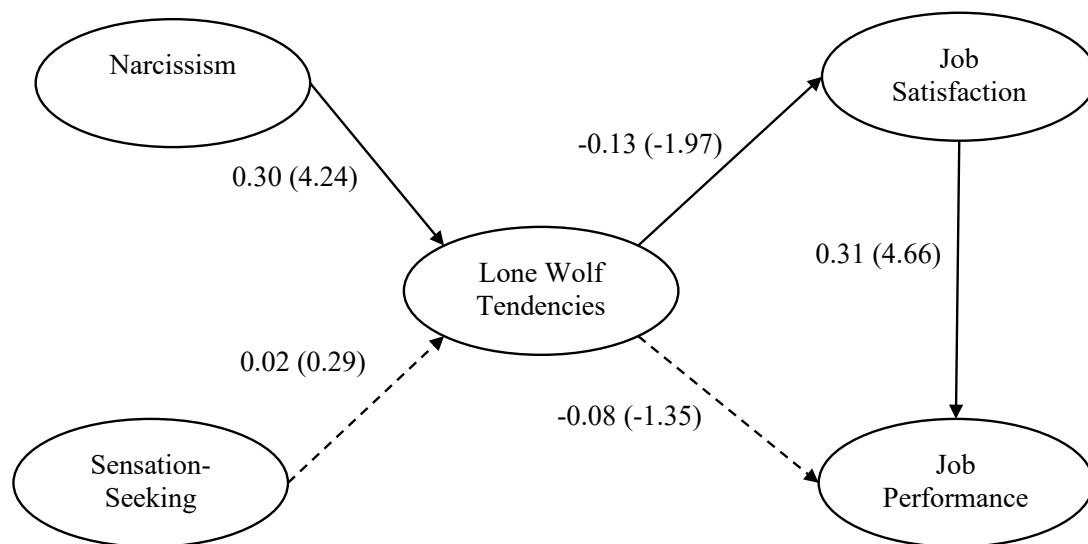
Constructs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Narcissism	1							
2 Sensation-seeking	.14*	1						
3 Lone wolf	.28**	.05	1					
5 Job Performance	-.10	-.04	-.12*	1				
4 Job Satisfaction	-.07	-.00	-.13	.30**	1			
6 Age	-.17**	-.40**	.00	-.04	-.03	1		
7 Sales Experience	-.16**	-.35**	.03	-.04	.03	.80**	1	
8 Sex (Male = 0, Female = 1)	.11*	-.11	-0.03	.17**	-.05	-.16**	-.15**	1
Mean	3.5	3.6	3.5	5.8	5.0	42.4	14.9	.42
Standard Deviation	1.3	1.4	1.2	.95	1.1	12.9	11.1	0.49

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

\* Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

### Hypothesis Testing

A structural equation model in AMOS tested the hypothesized relationships. The results indicate acceptable fit with the data:  $\chi^2 = 598.25$ ,  $df = 293$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .93; RMSEA = .058 (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2010). None of the control variables have a significant influence on the hypothesized relationships. Biological sex is the only control variable to have a significant relationship with job performance ( $\beta = .19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The results of the structural model are shown in Figure 1. Hypothesis 1 is not supported as sensation-seeking does not have a significant relationship with LWT ( $\beta = .02$ ,  $p = 0.772$ ). Hypothesis 2 is supported as narcissism has a significant and positive relationship with LWT ( $\beta = .30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Hypothesis 3 is not supported as LWT does not have a significant relationship to job performance ( $\beta = -.08$ ,  $p = 0.179$ ). Hypothesis 4 is supported as LWT has a significant and negative relationship with job satisfaction ( $\beta = -.13$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Figure 1 shows the Beta coefficients and T-values of the hypothesized model.

**Figure 1: Model Results**

### Post Hoc Evaluation of LWT to Job Performance

The insignificant relationship between LWT and job performance may be caused by the inclusion of job satisfaction in the model. In a meta-analysis Judge, Thoresen, Bono, and Patton (2001) review 7 Models of the job satisfaction – performance relationship. Past sales research on job performance - satisfaction predominantly examines the relationship as performance leading to satisfaction (e.g., Mulki et al. 2007). This is Model 2 in Judges et al. (2001) classification. The underlying assumption in Model 2 is that people who perform better (e.g., higher sales volume) will be more satisfied with their job. However, this is not the only way to view the job satisfaction – performance relationship. Judge et al. (2001) Model 1 is grounded in the attitude literature in social psychology and proposes that job satisfaction can lead to performance. The fundamental premise of this view is that “people who evaluate an attitude object favorably tend to engage in behaviors that foster or support it” (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993, p. 12). Additionally, self-determination theory suggests that job satisfaction influences job performance due to increased feelings of competence, autonomy, and relatedness, which ultimately facilitated self-motivation and performance (Baard, Deci and Ryan, 2004). Thus, we expand the sales literature by using Judge et al.’s (2001) Model 2 (satisfaction to performance) to examine the mediating role of LWT.

To determine if job satisfaction mediates the LWT to job performance relationship, a post hoc analysis is performed. A structural model with 5,000 bootstrap samples and 90% confidence intervals (CIs) assessed the indirect effect of LWT on job performance. Results reveal a significant negative indirect effect of LWT on job performance through job satisfaction. The results provide support for mediation as the confidence interval does not contain zero (90% CI [-.084, -.004]) (Hayes, 2017; Zhao, Lynch, and Chen 2010).

### DISCUSSION

This study contributes to our understanding of LWT and workplace outcomes. In doing so, this research explores two potential antecedents, sensation-seeking and narcissism, and two organizational outcomes, job

satisfaction and job performance. While Zuckerman (1994) proposes that sensation seekers could be drawn to sales careers and appear to share similar characteristics as lone wolves, our study did not show a significant relationship. This demonstrates that sensation seeking is not related to LWT. One potential reason for this may be how sensation seekers and lone wolves differ with respect to *fear*. While lone wolves dislike working with others, they do care about how others view them. Lone wolves fear making mistakes that could tarnish their *perfect* self-image (Locander et al., 2015). Lone wolves avoid taking undue risks because resulting failures may put them in a negative social spotlight. This is in contrast to sensation seekers who embrace fear and the thrill of overcoming it. By overcoming fear, sensation seekers revel in self-satisfaction and enjoy recognition from others (Zuckerman, 1994; Horvath and Zuckerman, 1993).

Results from the present study support the relationship between narcissism and LWT. Narcissists are confident and charming individuals with a grandiose sense of self-worth. They are likely to engage in lone wolf behaviors due to their inflated self-confidence. They are so confident in themselves that they will likely reject input from colleagues because they are seen as inferior. Additionally, past research suggests that narcissistic salespeople could have a detrimental effect on buyer-seller relationships due to their inability to empathize with customers (Smith, 2017). Empathy is critical in buyer-seller relationships (Locander, Locander, and Weinberg, 2020), as sellers must empathize with their buyers’ feelings, thoughts, and intentions (Davis, 1980). Lone wolves with narcissistic tendencies lack the willingness/ability to empathize with others, coupled with an elevated need for self-gratification, and you have a recipe for toxic and potentially unethical buyer-seller relationships. The positive relationship between narcissists and LWT advances our understanding of the antecedence to LWT and adds to the literature suggesting that LWT salespeople may not fit in with organizations emphasizing collective/team selling approaches.

While LWT research shows a number of positive individual attributes (e.g., job involvement, hardworking, etc.) (Ingram et al., 1991; Griffeth et al., 1999), these

positive attributes have not resulted in empirically supported positive organizational outcomes. Findings from the present research support the growing body of literature demonstrating the negative impact that LWT has on sales organizations (Ingram et al., 1991; Mulki et al., 2007; Briggs et al., 2012). Our findings show that LWT has a negative direct effect on job satisfaction and a negative indirect effect on job performance. LWT's negative direct effect on job satisfaction is important as this is the first study to empirically demonstrate the relationship. While salespeople with LWT may be highly involved in their job (e.g., Ingram et al., 1991), they are not satisfied leading them to continuously look for new job opportunities. In addition, as demonstrated by the significant indirect effect, LWT has a negative impact on performance through job satisfaction. This finding lends some support to Judge's et al. (2001) Model 2 (satisfaction to performance). This provides some insight into the LWT to performance relationship. LWT may not be the direct cause for low job performance but rather negatively influence other mediating factors (e.g., satisfaction) which in turn, causes the drop in performance. Thus, as salespeople are customer-facing boundary spanners, organizations with unsatisfied and under-achieving salespeople run the risk of having long-term negative effects in the marketplace.

### **Managerial Implications**

The results of this study provide important managerial implications. The finding that narcissism has a positive effect on LWT creates an issue for sales managers. The issue of narcissistic tendencies presents a challenge for both the selection and management of salespeople. Individuals high in narcissism seem to be attracted to sales positions (Soyer et al., 1999) and receive favorable evaluations by trained interviewers (Campbell Hoffman, Campbell, and Marchisio, 2011). It is no wonder that narcissists interview so well because they are charming, confident, assertive, gregarious, and attractive to others (Smith, 2017; Back, Schmulke, and Egloff, 2010; Campbell et al., 2011; Soyer et al., 1999). However, the bright side of narcissism turns problematic once hired. Individuals with such tendencies lack empathy, are exploitive, behave selfishly, exhibit a strong sense of entitlement, are preoccupied with their own goals to the exclusion of competing priorities, and do not deal

constructively with failure (Smith, 2017; O'Boyle et al., 2012; Wallace and Baumeister, 2002; Emmons, 1987; Raskin and Hall, 1979).

While several characteristics, hiring heuristics, and sales experience should all be considered when hiring salespeople, there are specific characteristics that managers should look out for when interviewing candidates (Bolander, Saturnino, Allen, Hochstein & Dugan, 2020). Research suggests that, over time, salespeople learn to model only the behaviors that lead to performance and gains in their sales position (Bolander et al., 2020). Given that narcissists can be charming during job interviews, as that behavior has worked to gain business and positions in the past, sales managers may want to be alert to such behaviors during the hiring process. Sales managers may want to utilize psychometric questionnaires to assess candidates' level of narcissism and/or LWT. This could yield deeper insights into the "nature" of a job candidate with respect to person-job fit. In addition to using psychometric questionnaires, interviewers need to be aware of how narcissists communicate. Narcissists predominantly use language in an autocratic manner rather than communicate to foster understanding (Akhtar and Thomson, 1982). This communication tendency focusses the conversation on themselves. This often takes the form of exaggerations about themselves (Akhtar and Thomson, 1982). This self-centered communication tendency is supported by past research that associates narcissism with interpersonal dominance (Ruiz, Smith, and Rhodewalt, 2001). This trait is not likely to fit well with collaborative selling approaches. Additionally, narcissistic communication tends to be less straightforward, and conversations tend to go in circles (Akhtar and Thomson, 1982). Narcissistic individuals like to communicate in an impersonal manner with statements like "the thought occurred . . .," or "one feels that. . . ." (Akhtar and Thomson, 1982, p. 15). By being aware and/or trained to identify narcissistic communication tendencies, hiring specialists or sales managers will hopefully see through the charming qualities of job candidates and identify narcissistic salespeople during the interview process. While one characteristic alone should not be the determinant of whether to hire, sales managers should implement a formal evaluating process. For example, the Chally



group recommend the 30-30-30-10 Rule where “thirty percent of a final selection should be based on predictive assessment results, 30% on background information and reference checks, 30% based on structured interview results, and the final 10% on perceived fit with the company’s culture” (Chally, n.d.).

While screening job candidates is a good first step in determining the fit of job characteristics and lone wolfism, it is not enough. Locander et al. (2015) put forth the “nature vs. nurture” notion of LWT. They propose that the context of the work setting can influence LWT. Locander et al. (2015) found that interactions within a sales organization may foster LWT within the salesforce. Findings from the present study highlight the negative impact LWT has on organizational outcomes. Given these results, sales managers need to be aware of their own managerial style and attempt to foster a culture of inclusion to avoid creating lone wolf tendencies within their sales force. One-way sales managers can attempt to reduce LWT within their sales organization is by utilizing transformational leadership that promotes a more “collective” mentality that influences salespeople to transcend their own self-interests for that of the sales force or organization (Carrillat, Jaramillo, and Locander, 2004; Mulki, Jaramillo, Locander, 2005). Greg McBeth, Head of Revenue at Node.io, makes this point:

“There’s no more dangerous myth in sales than that of the Lone Wolf... In today’s sales environment, the solo salesperson often struggles to succeed... In other words, the wolves must learn to work as a pack.” (2018)

To do this, sales managers can use a dialogic communication style to foster empathic listening and understanding of overall organizational goals.

Additionally, sales organizations often work off the assumption that *internal* competition and competitive compensation plans will create an environment where salespeople are motivated to reach or exceed their sales goals (Jelinek and Ahearne, 2006; Walker, Churchill, and Foard, 1977). However, this assumption has a dark side that can create a non-inclusive and isolating workplace (Bellizzi 1995; Brown, Cron, and Slocum 1998; Kohn, 1998). A highly competitive and individualistic culture is a ripe breeding ground for LWT. To foster a “we”

mentality, sales managers may consider shifting the organizational control structures (e.g., compensation and performance evaluation) from individual-based outcomes (e.g., dollars sold) to a more team-based approach focusing on overall organizational goals. The type of reward system may influence the behavior of lone wolves. Sales managers should be aware of issues surrounding the “folly of rewarding A, while hoping for B” (Kerr, 1975). Lone wolves tend to be achievement-oriented, and if rewards are based totally on sales targets, then lone wolfism may be reinforced by a single dimension reward plan. However, if rewards are clearly tied to both behavioral and output performance, it is likely that lone wolves will try to maximize as many dimensions as possible.

### Limitations and Future Research

Although the present study provides academic and managerial insights into the antecedents and organizational outcomes of LWT, it is not without limitations. A current limitation of this study is the use of a self-reported performance measure. This is a common limitation within sales research as obtaining sensitive objective sales data is challenging for academic purposes (Bommer, Johnson, Rich, Podsakoff, and Mackenzie, 1995; Yang, Kim, and McFarland, 2011). Another limitation of the study is that the sample of B2B salespeople was obtained through a Qualtrics online panel. While the researchers have gone to great lengths to make sure the sample met the study’s parameters, there is no way to guarantee the authenticity of our sample. Future research should address these limitations by testing the model with objective measures of performance from a sample not obtained through a panel.

The present study provides several opportunities for future research, particularly in the area of narcissism and LWT. As mentioned above, narcissists use language differently. This differentiation provides a great opportunity as researchers can examine language usage and compare it to organizational outcomes. For example, many inside sales organizations record buyer-seller conversations. These conversations can be analyzed for narcissistic language and compared to organizational outcomes (e.g., sales, turnover, ethical breaches, etc.). Additionally, future research is needed

on the LWT and narcissism relationship. While this study found that narcissism led to LWT, future research could examine narcissism as an antecedent to LWT.

Another area of future research is LWT at the sales management level. To date, no study has examined the effects sales managers with LWT have on the sales force. LWT sales managers could affect things like organizational commitment, ethical climate, job performance, and turn-over intention, to name a few. Finally, while this research did not find a significant relationship between sensation seeking and LWT, future sales research needs to explore the sensation-seeking construct. One potential research idea is to develop a salesperson sensation-seeking scale that focuses on different elements of the sales process (e.g., the thrill of the hunt, anxiety of negotiation, the high from a big sale, etc.). This would make the sensation-seeking construct domain-specific to sales and potentially provide greater insights into the role of sensations within salespeople.

## REFERENCES

- Akhtar, Salman, and Anderson J.A. Thomson Jr. (1982), "Overview: Narcissistic Personality Disorder," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 139 (1), 12-20.
- Baard, Paul P., Edward L. Deci, and Richard M. Ryan (2004), "Intrinsic Need Satisfaction: A Motivational Basis of Performance and Well-Being in Two Work Settings 1," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 34 (10), 2045-2068.
- Babin, Barry J., Mitch Griffin, and Joseph F. Hair Jr. (2016), "Heresies and Sacred Cows in Scholarly Marketing Publications," *Journal of Business Research*, 69 (8), 3133-3138.
- Back, Mitja D., Stefan C. Schmukle, and Boris Egloff (2010) "Why are Narcissists so Charming at First Sight? Decoding the Narcissism-Popularity Link at Zero Acquaintance," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98 (1), 132-145.
- Back, Mitja D., Albrecht CP Küfner, Michael Dufner, Tanja M. Gerlach, John F. Rauthmann, and Jaap JA Denissen (2013), "Narcissistic Admiration and Rivalry: Disentangling the Bright and Dark Sides of Narcissism," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 105 (6), 1013-1037.
- Bagozzi, Richard P. (1980), "Performance and Satisfaction in an Industrial Sales Force: An Examination of their Antecedents and Simultaneity," *Journal of Marketing*, 44 (2), 65-77.
- Bellizzi, Joseph A. (1995), "Committing and Supervising Unethical Sales Force Behavior: The Effects of Victim Gender, Victim Status, and Sales Force Motivational Techniques," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 15 (2), 1-15.
- Bettencourt, B., Amelia E. Talley, Arlin James J. Benjamin, and Jeffrey Valentine (2006), "Personality and Aggressive Behavior Under Provoking and Neutral Conditions: A Meta-Analytic Review," *Psychological Bulletin*, 132 (5), 751-777.
- Bolander, W., Cinthia B. Satornino, Alexis M. Allen, Bryan Hochstein, and Riley Dugan (2020) "Whom to Hire and How to Coach them: A Longitudinal Analysis of Newly Hired Salesperson Performance," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 40 (2), 78-94.
- Bommer, William H., Jonathan L. Johnson, Gregory A. Rich, Philip M. Podsakoff, and Scott B. MacKenzie (1995), "On the Interchangeability of Objective and Subjective Measures of Employee Performance: A Meta-Analysis," *Personnel Psychology*, 48 (3), 587-605.
- Braun, Susanne (2017), "Leader Narcissism and Outcomes in Organizations: A Review at Multiple Levels of Analysis and Implications for Future Research," *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8 (773), 1-20.
- Briggs, Elten, Fernando Jaramillo, and William A. Weeks (2012), "The Influences of Ethical Climate and Organization Identity Comparisons on Salespeople and Their Job Performance," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 32 (4), 421-436.
- Brown, Steven P., William L. Cron, and John W. Slocum Jr. (1998), "Effects of Trait Competitiveness and Perceived Intraorganizational Competition on Salesperson Goal Setting And Performance," *Journal of Marketing*, 62 (4), 88-98.
- Campbell, W. Keith, Brian J. Hoffman, Stacy M. Campbell, and Gaia Marchisio (2011), "Narcissism in Organizational Contexts," *Human Resource Management Review*, 21 (4), 268-284.
- Campbell, W. Keith, Glenn D. Reeder, Constantine Sedikides, and Andrew J. Elliot (2000), "Narcissism and Comparative Self-Enhancement Strategies," *Journal of Research in Personality*, 34 (3), 329-347.

- Carrillat, François A., Fernando Jaramillo, and William B. Locander (2004), "Market-Driving Organizations: A Framework," *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 5 (1), 1-14.
- Carter, Kenneth (2019), *Buzz!: Inside the Minds of Thrill-seekers, Daredevils, and Adrenaline Junkies*. Cambridge University Press.
- Churchill Jr, Gilbert A., Neil M. Ford, and Orville C. Walker Jr. (1974), "Measuring the Job Satisfaction of Industrial Salesmen," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 11 (3), 254-260.
- Cicala, John E., Alan J. Bush, Daniel L. Sherrell, and George D. Deitz (2014), "Does Transparency Influence the Ethical Behavior of Salespeople?", *Journal of Business Research*, 67 (9), 1787-1795.
- Chally (n.d.), "Competency-Based Interviews", <https://chally.com/products-services/predictive-assessment/sales-candidate-assessment/competency-based-interviews/#:~:text=30%2D30%2D30%2D10%20Rule&text=Thirty%20percent%20of%20a%20final,fit%20with%20the%20company's%20culture>
- CSO Insights (2018) *The Growing Buyer-Seller Gap: Results of the 2018 Buyer Preferences Study*. Littleton: Miller Heiman Group.
- Davis, Mark H. (1980), "A Multidimensional Approach to Individual Differences in Empathy," *JSAS Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology*, 10 (1), 85.
- Dixon, Andrea L., Jule B. Gassenheimer, and Terri Feldman Barr (2003), "Identifying the Lone Wolf: A Team Perspective," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 23 (3), 205-219.
- Dixon, Matthew, and Brent Adamson (2011), *The Challenger Sale: Taking Control of The Customer Conversation*. Penguin.
- Eagly, Alice H., and Shelly Chaiken (1993), *The Psychology of Attitudes*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.
- Emmons, Robert A. (1987), "Narcissism: Theory and Measurement," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52 (1), 11-17.
- Gartner (2019), "The New B2b Buying Journey", <https://www.gartner.com/en/sales/insights/b2b-buying-journey>
- Griffeth, Rodger W., Stefan Gaertner, and Jeffrey K. Sager (1999), "Taxonomic Model of Withdrawal Behaviors: The Adaptive Response Model," *Human Resource Management Review*, 9 (4), 577-590.
- Groza, Mark D., David A. Locander, and Charles H. Howlett (2016), "Linking Thinking Styles to Sales Performance: The Importance of Creativity and Subjective Knowledge," *Journal of Business Research*, 69 (10), 4185-4193.
- Hair Jr, Joseph F., William C. Black, Barry J. Babin, and Rolph E. Anderson (2010), *Multivariate Data Analysis* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Hayes, Andrew F. (2017), *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, And Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach*. Guilford publications.
- Hendin, Holly M., and Jonathan M. Cheek (1997), "Assessing Hypersensitive Narcissism: A Reexamination of Murray's Narcism Scale," *Journal of Research in Personality*, 31 (4), 588-599.
- Horvath, Paula, and Marvin Zuckerman (1993), "Sensation Seeking, Risk Appraisal, and Risky Behavior," *Personality and Individual Differences*, 14 (1), 41-52.
- Ingram, Thomas N. (1996), "Relationship Selling: Moving from Rhetoric to Reality," *Journal Business*, 11 (1), 5-13.
- Ingram, Thomas N., Keun S. Lee, and George H. Lucas (1991), "Commitment and Involvement: Assessing A Salesforce Typology," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 19 (3), 187-197.
- Jelinek, Ronald, and Michael Ahearne (2006), "The Enemy Within: Examining Salesperson Deviance and Its Determinants," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 26 (4), 327-344.
- Judge, Timothy A., Carl J. Thoresen, Joyce E. Bono, and Gregory K. Patton (2001), "The Job Satisfaction-Job Performance Relationship: A Qualitative and Quantitative Review," *Psychological Bulletin*, 127 (3), 376-407.
- Kahn, Kenneth B. (2009), "Functional, Multifunctional, And Cross-Functional: Considerations for Marketing Management," *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 17 (1), 75-84.
- Kerr, Steven (1975), "On the Folly of Rewarding A, While Hoping For B," *Academy of Management Journal*, 18 (4), 769-783.

- Kohn, Alfie (1998), "How Incentives Undermine Performance," *The Journal for Quality and Participation*, 21 (2), 6-13.
- Larsen, Randy J., David M. Buss, Andreas Wismeijer, John Song, and Stéphanie van den Berg (2005), *Personality psychology: Domains of Knowledge About Human Nature* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw Hill.
- Locander, David A., Frankie J. Weinberg, Jay P. Mulki, and William B. Locander (2015), "Salesperson Lone Wolf Tendencies: The Roles of Social Comparison and Mentoring in A Mediated Model Of Performance," *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 23 (4), 351-369.
- Locander, David A., Jennifer A. Locander, and Frankie J. Weinberg (2020), "How Salesperson Traits and Intuitive Judgments Influence Adaptive Selling: A Sensemaking Perspective," *Journal of Business Research*, 118, 452-462.
- Lubit, Roy (2002), "The Long-Term Organizational Impact of Destructively Narcissistic Managers," *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 16 (1), 127-138.
- Malkin, Craig (2015), *Rethinking Narcissism: The Bad-And Surprising Good-About Feeling Special*. Harper Collins Publishers.
- Masson, Maxime, Julie Lamoureux, and Elaine De Guise (2020), "Self-Reported Risk-Taking and Sensation-Seeking Behavior Predict Helmet Wear Amongst Canadian Ski and Snowboard Instructors," *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement*, 52 (2), 121-130.
- Matias, Rebecca (2018), "The B2B Buying Process Has Changed: Here's How Not To Get Left Behind", <http://www.callboxinc.com/b2b-marketing-andstrategy/b2b-buying-process-changed-heres-not-get-left-behind/>
- McBeth, Greg (2018), "Entrepreneur", Retrieved from Taming the Lone Wolf: 4 Ways for Sales Leaders to Promote a Pack Mentality: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/313001>
- Morf, Carolyn C., and Frederick Rhodewalt (2001), "Unraveling the Paradoxes of Narcissism: A Dynamic Self-Regulatory Processing Model," *Psychological Inquiry*, 12 (4), 177-196.
- Mulki, Jay P., Fernando Jaramillo, and William Locander (2005), "Transform or Transact? Which Leader gets Better Results? A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Business & Leadership: Research, Practice, and Teaching* (2005-2012), 1 (1), 85-94.
- Mulki, Jay P., Fernando Jaramillo, and Greg W. Marshall (2007), "Lone Wolf Tendencies and Salesperson Performance," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 27 (1), 25-38.
- Murray, Henry A. (1938), *Explorations in Personality*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- O'Boyle, Donelson R., George C. Banks, and Michael A. McDaniel (2012), A Meta-Analysis of The Dark Triad and Work Behavior: A Social Exchange Perspective," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 97 (3), 557-579.
- Piercy, Nigel F., David W. Cravens, and Nikala Lane (2001), "Sales Manager Behavior Control Strategy and Its Consequences: The Impact of Gender Differences," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 21 (1), 39-49.
- Pincus, Aaron L., Nicole M. Cain, and Aidan GC Wright (2014), "Narcissistic Grandiosity and Narcissistic Vulnerability in Psychotherapy," *Personality Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment*, 5 (4), 439.
- Pullins, Ellen B., Thomas W Sharkey, Phuoc Pham, and Susan Shultz A. (2020), "Current Trends and Environmental Changes Impacting Sales Practice," *Journal of Selling*, 20 (1). 19-29.
- Raskin, Robert N., and Calvin S. Hall (1979), "A Narcissistic Personality Inventory," *Psychological Reports*, 45 (2), 590.
- Rhodewalt, Frederick, and Carolyn C. Morf (1995), "Self and Interpersonal Correlates of The Narcissistic Personality Inventory: A Review and New Findings," *Journal of Research in Personality*, 29 (1), 1-23.
- Rodriguez, Michael, and Stefanie L. Boyer (2016), "An Exploratory Study of Sales Managers' and Sales Professionals' Perceptions of eLearning and Job Performance," *Journal of Selling*, 16 (1), 5-17.
- Ruiz, John M., Timothy W. Smith, and Frederick Rhodewalt (2001), "Distinguishing Narcissism and Hostility: Similarities and Differences in Interpersonal Circumplex and Five-Factor Correlates," *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 76 (3), 537-555.
- Rutherford, Brian N., Greg W. Marshall, and JungKun Park (2014), "The Moderating Effects of Gender And Inside Versus Outside Sales Role In Multifaceted Job Satisfaction," *Journal of Business Research*, 67 (9), 1850-1856.

- Sedikides, Constantine, Eric A. Rudich, Aiden P. Gregg, Madoka Kumashiro, and Caryl Rusbult (2004), "Are Normal Narcissists Psychologically Healthy?: Self-Esteem Matters," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87 (3), 400-416.
- Sheaffer, Zachary, and Yael Brender-Ilan (2014), "Are Sensation Seekers in Control? A Study in Crisis Preparedness," *Risk Management*, 16 (1), 1-24.
- Smith, Garry J. (2017), "The Narcissistic Salesperson: A Framework of Their Relationships with Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, And Customer Orientation," *Atlantic Marketing Journal*, 6 (2), 1-22.
- Soyer, Renate B., Janet L. Rovenpor, and Richard E. Kopelman (1999), "Narcissism and Achievement Motivation as Related to Three Facets of the Sales Role: Attraction, Satisfaction and Performance," *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 14 (2), 285-304.
- Stanforth, Nancy (1995), "Fashion Innovators, Sensation Seekers, and Clothing Individualists," *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 81 (3\_suppl), 1203-1210.
- Stephenson, Michael T., Luis F. Velez, Patricia Chalela, Amelie Ramirez, and Rick H. Hoyle (2007), "The Reliability and Validity of the Brief Sensation Seeking Scale (BSSS-8) with Young Adult Latino Workers: Implications for Tobacco and Alcohol Disparity Research," *Addiction*, 102, 79-91.
- Uлага, Wolfgang, and James M. Loveland (2014), "Transitioning from Product to Service-Led Growth in Manufacturing Firms: Emergent Challenges in Selecting and Managing the Industrial Sales Force," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 43 (1), 113-125.
- Walker Orville C. Jr., Gilbert A. Churchill Jr, and Neil M. Ford (1977), "Motivation and Performance in Industrial Selling: Present Knowledge and Needed Research," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14 (2), 156-168.
- Wallace, Harry M., and Roy F. Baumeister (2002), "The Performance of Narcissists Rises and Falls with Perceived Opportunity for Glory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82 (5), 819-834.
- Yang, Byunghwa, Youngchan Kim, and Richard G. McFarland (2011), "Individual Differences and Sales Performance: A Distal-Proximal Mediation Model of Self-Efficacy, Conscientiousness, and Extraversion," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 31 (4), 371-381.
- Zhao, Xinshu, John G. Lynch Jr, and Qimei Chen (2010), "Reconsidering Baron and Kenny: Myths and Truths About Mediation Analysis," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (2), 197-206.
- Zuckerman, Marvin (1994), *Behavioral Expressions and Biosocial Bases of Sensation Seeking*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zuckerman, Marvin (2009), "Chapter 31. Sensation seeking". In *Handbook of Individual Differences in Social Behavior* Mark R Leary and Rick H. Hoyle, eds. New York/London: The Guildford Press. 455-465.