Can Social Selling be a Source of Stressors? Examining the Effect of Organizational Competence in Social Media on Technostress

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This study examines the salesperson-social selling interaction using the Job Demands-Resources theory as a theoretical basis. Specifically, we propose engaging in selling activities may act as stressors, leading to social selling-induced technostress. Survey data were collected online from 381 salespeople across various industries. Results revealed that social selling had a positive relationship with technostress. Moreover, organizational competence in social media found to have dual effects on salespeople's social selling usage and their perception. While this job resource improved the effectiveness of social selling as a sales strategy, it also reduced technostress perception. This study also examines the role of age as a moderator and results revealed that senior salespeople are more susceptible to a higher level of technostress perception.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, we have witnessed an unprecedented acceleration in the adoption of technologies such as social media for remote work and interacting with customers. According to McKinsey (Gavin *et al.*, 2020), at the start of the pandemic, more than 90% of business-to-business (B2B) sales organizations immediately shifted to remote selling, working via various technological tools. Also, due to the pandemic, the interaction between salespeople and customers has changed drastically (Rangarajan *et al.*, 2021). Social media platforms have become a primary means of communication and engagement with customers, offering a convenient and accessible way to interact with customers remotely (Wirtz & Göttel, 2021).

Salespeople have had to rapidly learn and utilize social media platforms to engage with customers, create content, and promote their brands (Nagashima *et al.*, 2021). Recent sales literature suggests that B2B salespeople need to be adaptable and adjust sales processes to be successful in the new digital era, especially when dealing with empowered customers (Guenzi and Habel, 2020; Guenzi and Nijssen, 2020; Marshall *et al.*, 2012; Samala *et al.*, 2019; Sharma *et al.*, 2020)Singh *et al.* 2019). Thus, both sales organizations and salespeople were urged to adapt to the new practicalities of doing business.

This shift cause disruption and place significant pressure on B2B salespeople and traditional sales organizations (Ancillai *et al.*, 2019; Rangarajan *et al.*, 2021) and fueled sustained growth in demand for technological tools (Bill *et al.*, 2020; Guenzi and Nijssen, 2020), and social selling in specific (Guenzi and Nijssen, 2020). Social selling is referred to by (Agnihotri *et al.*, 2012) as "a professional selling practice that is "predicated on the strength of social media allies within a social enterprise" and by (Trainor, 2012) as a capability "to use knowledge about customers and the network of customer relationships to effectively navigate the firm's sales cycle"

The increased interest in the use of social media by B2B salespeople has been well-documented in the sales literature (Ancillai *et al.*, 2019; Andzulis *et al.*, 2012; Bill *et al.*, 2020; Guenzi and Nijssen, 2020; Marshall *et al.*, 2012; Ogilvie *et al.*, 2018; Rapp *et al.*, 2013). However, this body of literature does not capture the essence of social selling as a fundamental change management process that may lead to profound stress that salespeople must confront during the transition.

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Social selling is very encompassing and involves deeper individual psychological reactions (Schwarzmüller *et al.*, 2018) and requires a broad set of managerial actions to respond to these reactions and, more specifically, to reduce salespeople's perceived stress brought by the use of social media (i.e., technostress). However, most studies to date have not investigated such psychological reactions and have focused only on training and technical support as key organizational drivers of adoption and usage.

Also, extant sales literature tends to focus mainly on the benefits of social media technology, overlooking the dynamic nature of social selling and the fact that it has positive and negative psychological consequences for salespeople that have been almost overlooked in the extant literature (Alnakhli, 2019; Brooks, 2015; Moore, 2000): on the one hand, it offers new goal achievement opportunities (e.g. lead generation, simplification of sales processes, effective tools for building a relationship with customers..etc..), but on the other hand, it is usually accompanied by greater job demands (e.g. the need to adopt new working methods, information overload, constant connectivity..etc.). Thus, there is a need for more research to learn more about the negative impacts of social selling, how to encounter it and use it effectively and efficiently (Guesalaga, 2016; Ruuskanen, 2019). According to Tarafdar et al, 2015, technostress is emerging as an important area for scholarly research in various contexts. In fact, a great body of research argues that technostress may manifest its effects in the form of increased role overload, role conflict, exhaustion and burnout, and decreased job satisfaction (e.g., Tarafdar *et al.*, 2007; Ragu- Nathan *et al.*, 2008; Ayyagari *et al.*, 2011).

In addition, contemporary research recognizes the organizational competence in social media as a vital role facilitator and enhancer (Guesalaga, 2016). Thus, organizational competence in social media is defined as the company's knowledge about social media and the expertise in making productive use of it" (Guesalaga, 2016) .74). It has been argued that the more competent the company is in terms of social media usage, the higher should be the usage by its employees (Guesalaga, 2016). In sales organizations, if upper management is well-informed about social media, it is more likely that they will support initiatives of this kind. It is also expected that by having access to the company's technology capabilities, the sales department will be more willing to engage in using social media to communicate with customers, identify prospects, or support the selling process. This shows that the multifaceted effects of perceived organizational competence in social media as a job resource have not received scholarly attention in the context of a technostress and sales job.

Therefore, the objective of this research is to study social selling as a stressor that may lead to technostress. We draw on the job–demands-resources (JD–R) theory (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) to model the negative side of social selling (social selling induced–technostress; hereafter, SS–technostress), to examine organizational competence in social media as a job resource that could increase social selling usage and weaken the perception of technostress. This study also examines the role of age as a moderator.

This research aims to contribute to sales research in several ways. First, we extend the sales technology literature by examining the impacts of social selling on creating technostress. Second, we introduce organizational competence in social media as a job resource with dual effects. Third, we propose that age can moderate the relationship between social selling and technostress. Fourth, we provide practical tips for sales organizations as well as managerial implications to aid. Our study is organized as follows: we first discuss the theoretical background, which is followed by our hypotheses development and presentation of the findings. We conclude with a discussion of the implications and limitations of our study.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND MODEL DEVELOPMENT

Job Demands–Resources

JD-R theory (Bakker *et al.*, 2010; Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) serves as a foundation for this study as it provides a useful framework. JD-R adheres to several basic principles. First, job characteristics can be classified as either job resources or job demands. Second, these resources and demands interact to influence job outcomes via two paths – employee job engagement

and employee job stress. In other words, JD-R theory assumes that the psychosocial characteristics of every job can be divided into two groups: job demands and job resources (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007) and explains their role in the depletion resources process. Job demands "include the physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or physiological (cognitive and emotional) effort and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs" (Bakker *et al.*, 2003). The category of job demands includes cognitive and emotional demands that contain different job characteristics such as work overload, high work pressure, or poor environmental conditions (Bakker & Demerouti 2007).

Job resources "refer to those physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of the job that either/or (1) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs; (2) are functional in achieving work goals; (3) stimulate personal growth, learning and development" (Schaufeli and Bakker, 2004). JD-R theory posits that job resources can play a role in the energy depletion process that is associated with high job demands because employees with high levels of resources have more supplies, which makes them more capable of handling job demands (Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2007). Hence, job resources may buffer the energy depletion process that is associated with job demands, thereby reducing stress as well as enhancing employees' well-being, preventing burnout, and stimulating employees' work engagement (Van Ruysseveldt *et al.*, 2011). Furthermore, job resources have the motivational potential to promote employees' learning, growth, and development–the intrinsic motivation role– as well as to nurture their willingness to dedicate effort and bring their abilities to different tasks–the extrinsic motivation role (Bakker and Demerouti, 2007).

Further, JD-R suggests that the presence of job stressors alone does not necessitate harmful effects for employees. Essentially, when encountering high demands, employees assess whether they have the resources to manage the demands or not. According to (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984), stress results when external factors act as stressors, and disrupt the individual's perception of the equilibrium of the cognitive–emotional–environmental system. To the extent that a salesperson believes that he/she has the resources to cope with the demands, then he/she will not experience harmful stress.

Along these lines, JD-R suggests a two-step process. First, job demands are encountered. These demands lead to overtaxing. Second, job resources are weighed. Ultimately, it is the combination of job demands and resources (or a lack thereof) that dictates whether overtaxing leads to stress and/or withdrawal (e.g., (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001). Understanding the interaction of job resources and job demands is paramount to explaining stress and consequently employee job–related outcomes. Further, another stream of research in this area has begun to consider personal resources, which are aspects of individuals rather than characteristics of their workplace environments (Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2007). Thus, relying on J-DR, we propose that social selling can be viewed as a challenge to job demand, as it poses an opportunity to increase salesperson's technostress perception. We further postulate that such negative outcomes of social selling can be weakened through organizational competence in social media and vie other personal resources such as gender (Xanthopoulou *et al.*, 2007). Organizational competence in social media act as a stress intervention strategy, which can help in effectively coping with the increased technostress perception.

Social Selling

Social selling can be defined as "the practice of leveraging social networks and the associated tools in the overall sales function, from lead generation to closed deal to account management" (Hudson, 2014). Practitioners and academics alike have started to explore social selling as a prominent contemporary selling approach with considerable potential in the B2B sales domain. With regards to practitioners, (Minsky and Quesenberry, 2016) indicate that social selling is the strategy of including social media in the salesperson's toolbox to research, prospect, network, and build relationships by sharing content and answering questions.

(Trainor, 2012) also predicted the integration of social selling and social CRM technology to be implemented

in sales processes and technologies that already exist in the firm. Social CRM enables the salespeople to develop deeper knowledge of their customers and it has raised the need for social selling which uses the knowledge from social CRM resources. According to (Curtis and Giamanco, 2010), salespeople can draw attention, communicate, and close business with potential customers when doing social selling (Schultz *et al.*, 2012). As per (Kim and Talbott, 2018), in social selling, salespeople focus on understanding the customer and his/her pain points through communications in social media channels. Thus, in this study, the concept of social selling is referring to sales activities done through social media and the utilization of social media throughout the entire B2B sales process.

Social selling– technostress

Clinical psychologist (Brod, 1984) coined the term technostress and defined it as "a modern disease of adaptation caused by an inability to cope with new technologies in a healthy manner". Also, Technostress has been defined as any negative impact on attitudes, thoughts, behaviors, or physiology that is caused either directly or indirectly by technology (Weil and Rosen, 1997). According to (Ragu-Nathan *et al.*, 2008) Technostress is the stress experienced by individuals due to the use of information and communications technologies.

To understand the phenomenon of technostress, it is important to identify the factors that create it (Ragu-Nathan *et al.*, 2008). Technological tools can create stress in several ways. First, their capabilities for constant connectivity extend the regular workday (Mandel *et al.*, 2005). Salespeople can be reached anywhere and anytime, and often are required to respond to the extent that not connecting becomes disquieting. This type of continual exposure leads individuals to feel they are never free, and that their time and space have been invaded (Ragu-Nathan *et al.*, 2008). Second, mobile communication tools such as laptops and smartphones have made it routine for salespeople to simultaneously handle different streams of information from internal and external sources. This has resulted in communication and information overload, where salespeople are exposed to more information than they can efficiently handle (Fisher and Wesolkowski, 1999). In addition, salespeople feel that they are forced to work faster to cope with the increased processing requirements. The need for speed can result in what is known as the "information fatigue" (Weil and Rosen, 1997) and "data smog" (Brillhart, 2004). Finally, while technology tools aid in multitasking and help salespeople accomplish more in less time, there are limits to these benefits - and the use of technology tools can push salespeople to exceed those limits. In general, it has been shown that excessive multitasking increases tension, diminishes perceived control, and decreases job satisfaction (Brillhart, 2004). In the sales literature, (Tarafdar *et al.*, 2011) explores the relationships between technostress, role stress, technology self-efficacy, and technology-enabled performance among business-to-business salespeople. Their findings show a positive relationship between technostress, role stress, and a negative relationship between role stress and performance.

Recently, (Tarafdar *et al.*, 2014) examine relationships between technostress creators, role stress, technology-enabled innovation, and technology-enabled performance. They hypothesize that technostress negatively affects the technology-enabled performance of the salesperson through two distinct paths, one by increasing role stress and two by decreasing technology-enabled innovation. They further examine the role of factors such as technology self-efficacy that mitigate these adverse effects. Their findings indicate that organizational technostress-inhibiting mechanisms negatively moderate the positive relationship between technostress creators and role stress, and technology self-efficacy dampens the negative association between technostress and technology-enabled innovation. The authors also find that technology-enabled innovation enhances technology-enabled performance. However, other studies have found no significant relationship between social media use and technostress (Cao and Sun, 2017; Li *et al.*, 2017).

Social media technology is often taken for granted and assumed to be mostly beneficial; however, its advantages come at a cost (Kapoor *et al.*, 2018; Orlikowski and Iacono, 2001). From the perspective of the user, using technology (i.e., social selling) requires high physical, social, and cognitive skills (Ayyagari *et al.*, 2011), potentially causing users to experience

stress when using technology (Ragu-Nathan *et al.*, 2008) and perceive technostress. In organizations, using technology might cause technostress as users have to work with tight time schedules, are afraid of being replaced, and feel their personal life is invaded by technology (Tarafdar *et al.*, 2010). These perceptions then cause users to feel exhausted, (Ayyagari *et al.*, 2011), to develop intentions to quit (Ragu-Nathan *et al.*, 2008) or to perform poorly (Tarafdar *et al.*, 2010).

SS– technostress is conceptualized in terms of several technostress creators of stressful situations that are induced by using technology. These creators include overload, invasion, complexity, and insecurity (Maier *et al.*, 2012). Previous research (i.e., IT literature) shows social media– technostress can arise for several of reasons. For example, (Bucher *et al.*, 2013) indicate that individuals may become overloaded by accessing and mentally processing information. Also, it has been found that the use of social media may result in feeling overly connected and, as such, function as a role stressor (Bucher *et al.*, 2013; Fonner and Roloff, 2012). However, the relationship between using social media and technostress has also been a topic of debate in the literature. Some studies have suggested that social media use can lead to increased technostress among employees (Kang and Im, 2016; Tarafdar *et al.*, 2015), while others have found no significant relationship between social media use and technostress (Cao and Sun, 2017; Li *et al.*, 2017).

For instance, Cao and Sun (2017) found no significant relationship between social media use and technostress among employees in China. Li *et al.* (2017) also found no significant relationship between social media use and technostress among employees in a Chinese context. The mixed findings regarding the relationship between social media use and technostress may be due to differences in social media use patterns, cultural differences, or individual differences in coping strategies for managing technostress.

Overall, it is clear that the relationship between social media usage and technostress is complex and can be influenced by a range of individual, cultural, and organizational factors. And because social media has different types of use (Andzulis *et al.*, 2012), this study expects that each type of social selling such as (monitoring event performance, targeting and communicating with customers, and building awareness, etc.) might bring a different type of technostress such as techno-overload. Thus, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Social selling will positively relate to the higher levels of perceived Technostress.

Organizational competence in social media as a job resource

Job resources are the conditions, or states, which need to be fulfilled in an organization for the actual behavior (in our case social selling) to take place (see also Bakker & Demerouti 2007). Organizational competence in social media can be defined as the firm's knowledge about social media and the expertise in making productive use of it, the extent to which the company has invested resources in social media, developed and communicated a strategy about its use (Guesalaga, 2016).

The perceived organizational competence (Guesalaga, 2016; Venkatesh *et al.*, 2003) concerns how much knowledge and tools an employee perceives an organization provides to perform his/her job. According to (Thompson *et al.*, 1991), organizational competence refers to facilitating conditions and providing tools that remove barriers and impediments and offer individuals the opportunity to efficiently adopt and use new technology.

Social media is not a fad that will soon fizzle out. Sales organizations that do not include social media in their business strategy run the risk of losing relevance in the market. Even conventional "brick and mortar" businesses have some presence in social media. In fact, more firms are including social media as part of their strategic planning processes, including recruitment, training, and development, and to influence organizational change (Saputra *et al.*, 2022). Thus, Since the proliferation of social media, salespeople's online behaviors are considered particularly vital for developing and maintaining the reputation of employer brands (Osburg *et al.*, 2020; Schaarschmidt & Walsh, 2018).

It has been found that if higher management is knowledgeable about social media, it is more likely that they will support initiatives of this kind (Guesalaga

2016). According to Román & Rodríguez, 2015, higher levels of sales managers' competence with social media increase their effort and persistence and thus engage more in social media usage. Therefore, the more sales executives commit to using social media, the more likely is that B2B salespeople will adopt its use for the sales organization, as they face social pressure from their peers (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2005, Parthasarathy & Sohi, 1997). Moreover, the use of social media by sales managers should signal usefulness to salespeople and may become a norm for the group (Weinstein & Mullins, 2012).

In addition, it has been found that strong investments of the organization's scarce resources in offering infrastructure and support for the use of new tools will positively affect employee beliefs regarding the instrumentality and thus usefulness of these tools (Clark *et al.*, 2005). This also implies that any potential obstacles hindering the use of these tools will be resolved if they arrive (Clark *et al.*, 2005).

As such, this factor is predicted to be positively related to the use of social selling. Numerous studies provide empirical support for the impact of competencies, support, and infrastructure on the capabilities of salespeople. (Sarin *et al.*, 2010), for example, found empirical support for a positive effect of training on the use of new sales technology, while (Hunter and Perreault Jr, 2006) find a positive impact of organizational support on salespeople's propensity to use and skills in a portfolio of firm-provided information technologies in their sales role. Also, (Clark *et al.*, 2005) reported a strong positive relationship between organizational infrastructure and employees' abilities. Therefore,

H2: The greater a salespeople's perceptions of organizational competence in social media, the greater their ability to integrate and use social media in their job.

Organizational competence in social media and Technostress

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory proposes that job demands and resources can impact employee well-being, job satisfaction, and work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In the context of social selling, social media usage can be considered a job demand, as it requires salespeople to use new technologies and engage with customers through digital channels. On the other hand, organizational competence in social media can be considered a job resource, as it provides salespeople with the skills and knowledge, they need to use social media effectively. In fact, few to no studies have examined the influence of perceived organizational competence on technostress. Thus, we propose that organizational competence in social media is an important predictor of reduced stress among salespeople when performing social selling. In other words, organizational competence in social media will contribute to a lower perceived technostress.

Consistent with social perception theorists, several scholars have suggested that individuals form a belief in the collective ability of organizations (Gillespie and Dietz, 2009; Schnackenberg and Tomlinson, 2016; Searle *et al.*, 2011). Specifically, ability has been known as the generalized competencies of organizations with which the organizations can effectively meet their goals and responsibilities (Gillespie and Dietz, 2009). In sum, two streams of theory suggest that employees develop a global perception of organizational competence or ability as well as having an impact on various performance outcomes. Generally, an individual perception explains the extent to which organizations are competent and equipped with tools and knowledge that aid employees perform effectively. All in all, research has shown that job resources can buffer the negative effects of job demands on employee well-being and performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Therefore, organizational competence in social media may reduce the negative impact of social media usage on technostress among salespeople. Since there has been no study to reveal the collective relationship among organizational competence in social media, social selling, and technostress, the need for conducting such a study has emerged. Thus,

H3: The higher levels of a salesperson's perception of organizational competence in social media will significantly relate to the lower levels of technostress.

The moderating role of salesperson's age

According to Burton-Jones and Hubona, 2005, the impact of age on a variety of performance outcomes is

especially salient in the work environment, particularly in the perceived easiness and usefulness of technology. Thus, age is a crucial variable to consider when discussing technology (Elias *et al.*, 2012).

Research has shown that as individuals age, their cognitive and physical abilities may decline, and they may experience changes in their motivation, attitudes, and values, which can affect their performance. For example, Mathieson *et al.* (2001) describe age as a measure of personal resources (or perceived behavioral control). Also, Morris and Venkatesh (2000) argue that age reduces perceived behavioral control because self-efficacy and cognitive skills decrease as people age (Morris & Venkatesh, 2000; Brigman & Cherry, 2002). They also argue that age increases the effect of subjective norms because older workers have a greater need for affiliation.

Moreover, a significant amount of research indicates that habits can become more entrenched with age, as routines become increasingly resistant to change (Harrison & Rainer, 1992; Majchrzak & Cotton, 1988; Nickel & Pinto, 1986). Overall, the paths through habits and behavioral control suggest that age negatively affects individuals' perception of technology's easiness and usefulness (Burton-Jones and Hubona, 2005). Individuals' perception of and adaptation to environments is variable, depending on their levels of personal resources (Bandura, 2000). Although, individuals' perception of technostress might depend on one's personality traits such as extraversion, introversion, neuroticism, etc. (Maier, 2014), individuals also differ in terms of characteristics and differences such as age, gender, and/ or experience (Ragu-Nathan *et al.*, 2008). The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory suggests that age can play a moderating role in the relationship between job demands and resources on employee well-being (Schaufeli *et al.* 2009). Specifically, the theory posits that older employees may have a greater need for job resources to cope with job demands due to their reduced ability to adapt to new technologies and work practices.

For instance, Demerouti *et al.* (2001) developed and tested the Job Demands-Resources model of burnout, which proposes that job demands and job resources have direct and indirect effects on burnout and engagement. They did not specifically examine age as a moderator, but the authors acknowledged that individual differences, such as age, could affect the relationships between job demands and resources and employee well-being.

Tims *et al.* (2013) conducted a field study to examine the effects of job crafting, which involves employees proactively changing the boundaries of their job to optimize resources and reduce demands. They found that age moderated the relationship between job crafting and job resources, such that the positive relationship was stronger for older workers. Further, Wang *et al.* (2017) investigated the relationships among transformational leadership, adaptability, job crafting, and age. They found that age moderated the relationships between transformational leadership and adaptability, and between adaptability and job crafting. Specifically, the positive relationships were stronger for younger workers.

Finally, Bal and Kooij (2011) examined the relationships among work centrality, psychological contracts, job attitudes, and age. They found that age moderated the relationships between work centrality and psychological contracts and between psychological contracts and job attitudes. Specifically, the positive relationships were stronger for older workers. Thus, age may moderate the relationship between social selling and technostress. Based on the above discussion, this study hypothesizes that,

H4: Age will moderate the relationship between social selling and technostress, such that the relationship will be stronger among older salespeople.

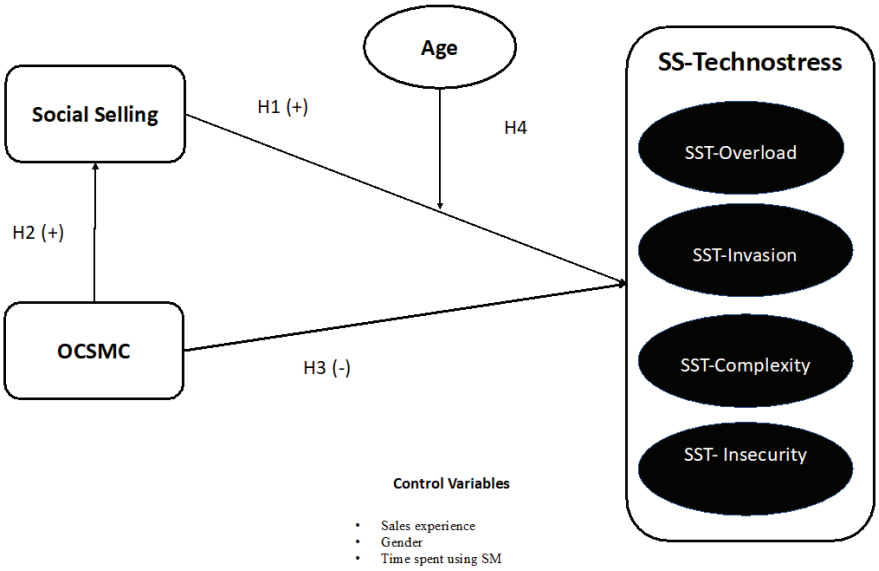
METHODOLOGY

Design

An online survey was used to test the proposed model. Participants were solicited for participation via Amazon's Mechanical Turk. To be eligible, respondents were required to meet the following screening criteria: 1) be a full-time salesperson, 2) use social media for work, and 3) be 18 years or older. An online survey was administrated to 400 participants. Responses from participants who did not complete the survey or who

failed an attention check item were eliminated from the sample, resulting in 381 cases for analysis. Respondents ranged in age from 18 – 65 years old (the average age was 36.5 years) and 38.32% were female.

Figure 1. Conceptual model



Note: OCSM = Organizational Competences in Social Media; SS = Social Selling

Measures

All measurement scales and their respective items were drawn from prior work and in some cases were modified to fit the requirements of this study (Appendix A). A seven-point Likert scale was used with "1 – Strongly disagree" to "7 – Strongly agree." SS– technostress was operationalized as the stress experienced by individuals due to the use of social selling technology. In specific, social selling–technostress includes four dimensions: (1) SST–Overload dimension [*exemplar item*: I am forced by social selling technology to do more work than I can handle], and it was assessed using a four-item scale; (2) SST–Invasion dimension [*exemplar item*: I have to be in touch with my work even during my vacation due to social selling technology] and it was assessed using a four-item scale; (3) SST–Complexity [*exemplar item*: I do not know enough about social selling technology to handle my job satisfactorily] and it was assessed using a five-item scale; and (4) SST–Insecurity [*exemplar item*: I am threatened by co-workers with newer social selling technology skills] and it was assessed using a five-item scale. These measures were adapted from the work of (Tarafdar *et al.*, 2014). Social selling was operationalized as a salesperson's use of social media for work purposes. In particular, salesperson's activities are done through leveraging social media in the entire sales process (Hudson, 2014). Social selling was measured using 7 items [exemplar item: I use social media to communicate with current customers] and it was adapted from (Agnihotri *et al.*, 2017) and (Trainor *et al.*, 2014). Organizational competence in Social Media was operationalized as the firm's knowledge about social media and the expertise in making productive use of it, the extent to which the company has invested resources in social media, and developed and communicated a strategy about its use (Guesalaga, 2016). And it was measured using 7 items [*exemplar item*: My total organization has a social media strategy]. Correlations between the constructs and the descriptive statistics of all constructs are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Construct correlations, descriptive statistics and reliability

		1	2	3	4	5	6	Mean	SD	CR	AVE	VIF
1	Social selling	***.1***						3.81	.55	.78	.50	1.32
2	SS-Technostress	.80**	***.1***					3.61	.91	.88	.80	1.22
3	Organizational Competence	.96*	.71**	***.1***				3.02	.60	.85	.51	1.23
4	Experience	.06	.04	.047	***.1***	.088	.072	4.22	.50	.83	.62	1.34
5 6	Time spent on SM Age	.05 .30*	.14 - .17**	.11 .10	.120* .02	***.1*** .26*	.169** ***.1***	4.15 5.21	.75 .99	1.00 1.00	1.00 1.00	2.13 1.00

ANALYSIS

Measurement model

A measurement model, also known as the "outer model", was first analyzed to examine the reliability, convergent and discriminant validity of constructs in the model. Using AMOS with maximum likelihood estimation, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). The fit indices of the model suggested a reasonable fit to the data [x^2 = 241.24, df = 114, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.89, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.08, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.05]. All the standardized loadings were above 0.5 and significant ($p < 0.01$), providing evidence of convergent validity. Further, all multi-item constructs had acceptable reliability based on Cronbach's alpha (>0.8) and composite reliability (>0.8) statistics. The average variance extracted (AVE) of each multi-item construct exceeded 0.6 and was also greater than the squared correlation between all pairs involving the construct, which demonstrated evidence of a discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

We conducted several tests to alleviate potential concerns of biases such as nonresponse bias and common method bias. For nonresponse bias, we conducted a comparison between early and late respondents on each of the constructs to see if there is any significant difference between the two groups (Armstrong and Overton, 1977). Results show no significant differences for any of the constructs therefore, nonresponse bias is not a concern in this study. To check the common method bias, Harman's single-factor method was performed by conducting an exploratory factor analysis for a one-factor model. Findings didn't support the one-factor model as the variance explained in this model accounted for only 39%, less than the 50% cutoff level. So, we made sure to communicate the importance of the anonymity of the respondents for the survey. This approach follows best practices to reduce the potential for common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Further, the bootstrapping technique was used to examine the significance level of the structural path coefficients. The tests conducted show no evidence of common method bias and the producers used to reduce the concern of such bias to take place in this study.

Structural Model

Next, we tested the structural model using PLS-SEM. The hypotheses were tested using the PLS Bootstrapping algorithm. Bootstrapping is a method to calculate the t-value of the path coefficient through iterative random sampling. In terms of the frequency of the sampling, it was performed 500 times (Chin, 1998; Efron and Tibshirani, 1997). Results are summarized in Table 2. In the model, social selling–technostress was

modeled as a second-order factor with the latent variable scores of the SST-Overload, SST-Invasion, SST-Complexity, and SST-Insecurity dimensions used as indicators of social selling–technostress. In addition to the hypothesized paths, we also controlled for the potential influence of sales experience, gender, and time spent using social media on technostress perception.

Table 2: Results

Relationships	Linear effects model	Moderated effects model
H1: Social selling → SS-Technostress	.26**	.23**
H2: Organizational competence → Social selling	.39**	.37**
H3: Organizational competence → SS-Technostress	-.22*	-.21*

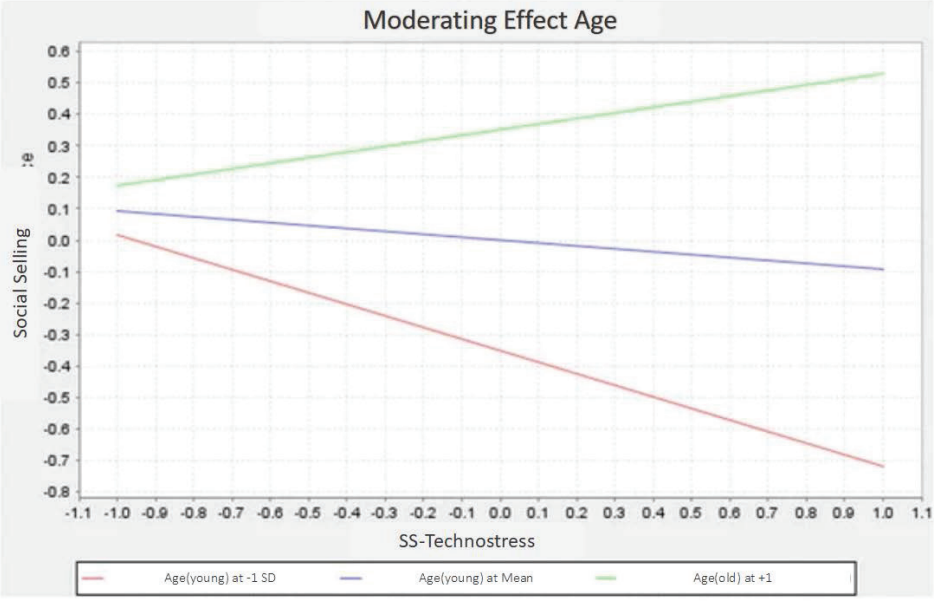
* p <.05; ** p <.01

RESULTS

The results of the PLS analysis show that when salespeople use social media for sales activities (social selling), they are more likely to experience a higher level of SS–technostress perception, in support of H1 ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$). Organizational competence in social media was positively related to social selling ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.001$) supporting H2. Also, organizational competence in social media was negatively related to technostress ($\beta = -0.21$, $p < 0.05$), in support of H3.

Next, we tested the moderating effect of salesperson age by running an interaction effects model. The results from this model show that salesperson age interacts with social selling to positively affect the salesperson's perception of technostress ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < 0.001$). This advances that the impact of salesperson's age on their perception of higher technostress level is stronger among older salespersons. To better interpret the moderating effect in H4, we plotted the effects in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Moderating effect



Note: AGE at-1 = Young; Age at +1 = Old

The graph presented in Figure 2 indicates the impact of age on the relationship between social selling and technostress. The older salespeople, the stronger the relationship between social selling and technostress perception. Therefore, age positively moderates this relationship.

Additional analysis: The effect of each social selling activity on technostress creators.

To find out which activity of social selling exactly was leading to the high perception of SS– technostress, the correlation analysis was performed (Table 3) It turned out that T–Overload is perceived due to the following social selling activities: (1) using social media to monitor event performance and visibility in the industry = .160** ; (2) using social media to maintain regular contact and constantly communicate with current customers = .195**; (3) using social media to monitor competitors = .212**; (4) using social media as a cold online messaging = .197**; and (5) using social media to its fullest for supporting one's own work such as obtaining referrals to other potential prospects = .179**. T– Insecurity correlations were not significant. T–Invasion was perceived due to the following social selling activities: (1) using social media to monitor event performance and visibility in the industry = .142**, and (2) using social media to monitor competitors = .120*. Interestingly, salespeople's perception of T-Complexity was negatively correlated with social selling (technostress perception decreased due to the use of social selling).

The lack of significant correlations between certain technostress dimensions and social selling activities may be explained by the nature of these dimensions and their relationship with specific job demands and/ or resources. For example, in a study by Kim and colleagues (2016), techno-overload was not significantly related to social media use by salespeople, but techno-invasion, which refers to the negative effects of technology on personal life, was. This suggests that salespeople may experience more technostress when they perceive that technology is encroaching on their personal life, rather than when they feel overwhelmed by the technology itself.

Table 3: Correlation (social selling and technostress)

* p < .05; ** p < .01

	Social Selling (SS)	SMI– Overload	SMI– Complexity	SMI– Invasion	SMI– Insecurity	SS 1	SS 2	SS 3	SS 4	SS 5	SS 6	SS 7
Social Selling (SS)	1	.208**	-.130*	.125*	0.048	.683**	.762**	.684**	.771**	.801**	.728**	.683**
SMI– Overload	.208**	1	.409**	.575**	.519**	.160**	.195**	.212**	0.066	.197**	.179**	0.016
SMI– Complexity	-.130*	.409**	1	.444**	.699**	-.102*	-.106*	-0.081	-0.098	-0.1	-0.039	-.149**
SMI– Invasion	.125*	.575**	.444**	1	.513**	.142**	0.097	.120*	0.034	0.066	0.082	0.084
SMI– Insecurity	0.048	.519**	.699**	.513**	1	0.018	0.046	0.048	0.028	0.036	0.095	-0.044
SS 1	.683**	.160**	-.102*	.142**	0.018	1	.408**	.480**	.383**	.389**	.359**	.413**
SS 2	.762**	.195**	-.106*	0.097	0.046	.408**	1	.376**	.511**	.735**	.424**	.430**
SS 3	.684**	.212**	-0.081	.120*	0.048	.480**	.376**	1	.469**	.367**	.400**	.338**
SS 4	.771**	0.066	-0.098	0.034	0.028	.383**	.511**	.469**	1	.566**	.556**	.493**
SS 5	.801**	.197**	-0.1	0.066	0.036	.389**	.735**	.367**	.566**	1	.564**	.514**
SS 6	.728**	.179**	-0.039	0.082	0.095	.359**	.424**	.400**	.556**	.564**	1	.415**
SS 7	.683**	0.016	-.149**	0.084	-0.044	.413**	.430**	.338**	.493**	.514**	.415**	1

DISCUSSION

Over the last few years, social media has been increasingly adopted in the workplace, and the COVID-19 pandemic has further accelerated and necessitated remote and digital working arrangements (Maier *et al.*, 2020). While social media can be beneficial for salespeople and work-related tasks, it can also lead to stress and negative health effects (Bondanini *et al.*, 2020). Technostress, which is the inability to adjust or cope with new computer technologies in a healthy way, has been called the "dark side" of technology since its inception by Craig Brod in 1984.

Technostress is a process that depends on an individual's experience and appraisal, and Ragu-Nathan and colleagues (2008) identified five technostress creators that cause this specific type of stress. They concluded that technostress extends other stress-related theoretical frameworks. A recent scient metric analysis revealed that many studies on work-related technostress were based on the transactional stress model by Lazarus (Tarafdar *et al.*, 2010). Technostress is associated with various work-related and health outcomes, such as exhaustion, satisfaction, and performance.

This study used the JD-R lens to examine individual salespeople's psychological responses (i.e., technostress) to social selling. As predicted by the energy depletion process of the JD-R model, our empirical results confirm that social selling is a strong predictor of perceived technostress. Further, the JD-R theory suggests that job demands and resources can affect employee well-being. Specifically, the theory posits that job resources can buffer the negative impact of job demands on employee well-being (Bakker and Demerouti, 2017). Our findings show that organizational competence in social media had a dual effect on social selling use and technostress perception. Although organizational competence improves and increases social selling use, it also reduces the perception of technostress.

Moreover, the JD-R theory proposes that job demands and job resources are the primary determinants of employee well-being and that the relationship between them is moderated by personal characteristics such as age (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Older salespeople may have a greater need for job resources to cope with job demands due to their reduced ability to adapt to new technologies and work practices. The present study's findings align with the JD-R theory, which suggests that older salespeople may experience higher levels of technostress in the context of social selling. In other words, age was found to moderate the relationship between social selling and technostress, suggesting that older salespeople may be more susceptible to technostress.

This study provides several important theoretical contributions and suggests practical recommendations for managers.

Contribution to theory

Several theoretical implications can be drawn from this study. First, using insights from the change sales and the technology literature, our study contributes to filling several important gaps in the sales technology literature, on one hand, and the JD-R literature, on the other hand. Particularly, we contribute to the literature on technology in sales by investigating one of the dark sides of social selling as salespeople's psychological reactions (i.e., technostress). Specifically, this study strives to extend the sales-technology literature that focuses on the sales professionals' job stress during the initial technology implementation/adoption (Speier and Venkatesh, 2002). Also, this study contributes to the Job Demands-Resources theory by demonstrating that social selling can lead to technostress, which supports the job demands aspect. Also, by sowing the role of organizational competence in social media as a job resource for salespeople.

Second, this study further develops our understanding of the phenomenon of technostress in the context of sales. More specifically, by adopting the JD-R model and considering both the stress and the organizational competencies, we contribute to a more balanced understanding of salespeople's psychological reactions to technostress during social selling usage (and, in a broader perspective, to technology) and potential ways to lessen the negative impact. This study also enhances the current technostress literature (Ayyagari *et al.*, 2011; Brooks and Califf, 2017; Maier *et al.*, 2012; Ragu-Nathan *et al.*, 2008; Tarafdar *et al.*, 2014) by finding antecedents of technostress (i.e., social selling).

Finally, while the professional sales literature has discussed variables like perceived usefulness as antecedents of social media use, the role of negative cognitions such as technostress in affecting social selling use-related outcomes had not yet been examined. Given existing mixed findings regarding the impact of sales technologies use on job-related outcomes such as the performance of the sales professional (Ahearne and Rapp, 2010), SS–technostress represents a promising domain for further exploration.

Managerial Implications

Our study offers interesting insights for managers. First, organizations and managers should be aware that social selling initiatives imply both bright and dark sides for their salespeople, and therefore, they should carefully analyze and understand the psychological consequences and related drivers of these initiatives and act accordingly. Of particular importance, they should invest more in organizational competencies in social media. (Javidan, 1998) defined the concepts of core competence, competencies, capabilities, and organizational resources, to create a universal understanding of these concepts. In addition, he established a hierarchy according to the difficulty in achieving higher levels and the increasing value they bring to the organization.

At the base of the hierarchy are the organizational resources, which constitute the inputs for the creation of value in the organization. At the second level are the capabilities that are the ability of the organization to exploit its resources; they consist of business processes and routines that direct the interaction between the resources. Capabilities are distinguished by having a functional basis. Competencies are on the third level of the hierarchy, they are a multifunctional integration and coordination of capabilities, a set of skills and know-how housed in a strategic business unit. Finally, at the highest level are the core competencies. Therefore, organizations have to either develop a new portfolio or enhance an existing portfolio of technology transformation competencies that allow flexibility and responsiveness to the rapid changes required to generate new value propositions for customers and transform operating models.

Given challenges associated with appropriating benefits from the use of sales force technology applications (i.e., SFA and CRM) (Ahearne *et al.*, 2004) and strategically important expectations from their use (Sarin *et al.*, 2010), insights into how technology-related stress relates to sales technology related-outcomes are critical to improving the practical application of the social selling. This study suggests that adding technology responsibilities could be associated with creating stress and negative job-related outcomes.

While increasing an individual's competence in using social selling can partially counter these effects, social selling related–understanding, and training could also be crucial. It appears necessary to go beyond standard training mechanisms and ensure through continuing education, involvement, confidence/belief building, and technical assistance– that sales professionals understand why specific technologies are implemented, how they can be used, what functionalities they beget, and how overall performance will be enhanced. Moreover, given that sales professionals are not typically located internally and physically in the organization, it is important to make them aware of support mechanisms that exist for their benefit.

This study also provides an instrument for assessing levels of SS– technostress among sales professionals through the "SS– technostress creators" construct. This instrument provides a mechanism to assess the psychological well-being of salespeople, as well as to management tool for remedying issues related to perceived stress. Since social selling is likely to become more pervasive in the sales force, management must become fully aware of issues related to how the infusion of social selling can lead to technostress and how to address them.

Furthermore, proper training is a key organizational process. Organizations can enhance the productivity of salespeople by imparting them with necessary knowledge through proper training, which is a crucial process to direct their actions and develop their skills. (Ahearne *et al.*, 2005). Training exercises will help build the sales force's ability to perform specific sales tasks using social media, such as competitor analyses

and better communicating with key accounts. Finally, providing salespeople with access to AI applications will aid the sales process and sales performance in general.

Salesforce's State of Sales report states that salespeople are not being replaced by AI, and most companies using or planning to use AI also intend to increase their staff. The reason behind this is that AI is generating practical value for sales teams by automating, enhancing, and optimizing their work, with various real-world use cases and tools being employed currently. Consequently, salespeople can concentrate on the most critical aspect —revenue. Together with those forms of organizational competence, it will increase perceptions of self-efficacy to perform tasks involving the use of social media efficiently and effectively.

In conclusion, organizational competence in social media can help reduce technostress among salespeople by providing training and support, offering guidelines and policies, encouraging breaks from social media, providing social media tools and technologies, and promoting a supportive organizational culture. By reducing technostress, organizations can help their salespeople use social selling effectively and efficiently, leading to increased job satisfaction and performance.

Limitations and Future Research

The present research should be couched within the context of its limitations, some of which provide directions for future research. First, even though every effort was made to ensure the validity of this research, survey respondents were Mturks participants. The online survey could possibly have a bearing on the findings, in that the participants might have experienced greater technostress due to the use of technology to complete the survey. Therefore, future studies can adopt traditional sampling to enhance generalizability. Furthermore, future research could use longitudinal designs to examine the relationships between organizational competence in social media, social media usage by salespeople, and technostress over time. Second, future research could investigate the moderating effects of individual differences, such as personality and coping strategies, on the relationships between these variables.

Third, this research did not specify any particular industry or sales jobs. Therefore, no conclusion can be drawn about any specific company or sales job type. From a research perceptive, it is also worth studying the relationship that might exist between formal technology training and reduced technostress. Such research could reveal insights into what training might be necessary and appropriate. Fourth, SS– technostress is a form of stress. Thus, future studies could investigate whether stress is more prevalent in salespeople who are stressed anyway or not. That is if an individual is considered to be a stressful person and technology is added to that person's basic tasks, is s/he more likely to exhibit greater technostress than someone who is not a stressful person in nature?

Fifth, in the context of social selling, some dimensions of technostress may be more closely related to job demands, whereas others may be more closely related to job resources. Overall, the JD-R theory provides a useful framework for understanding why some dimensions of technostress may be more closely related to job demands or resources, and how these dimensions may influence the relationship between social selling and technostress. Future research could explore these relationships further and investigate how different job demands and resources may affect the experience of technostress among salespeople.

Finally, this study did not examine overall stress. Thus, future research could address the following questions: (1) is it possible that social selling induced technostress, but does it increase overall stress? (2) is it possible that the increase in technostress is compensated for by a decrease in overall stress? In the end, this study did not investigate whether participants are already facing some form of stress or not. Thus, the level of existing overall stress was not measured.

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APPENDIX A

Measurement	Loading
Social media induced- technostress- Overload (Tarafdar et al., 2014)	
I am forced by social media technology to work much faster.	.88
I am forced by social media technology to do more work than I can handle.	.88
I am forced to change my work habits to adapt to new social media technology.	.87
I am forced by social media technology to work with very tight time schedules	.92
Social media induced- technostress- Invasion (Tarafdar et al., 2014)	
I spend less time with my family due to social media technology.	.83
I have to be in touch with my work even during my vacation due to social media technology	.82
I have to sacrifice my vacation and weekend time to keep current on social media technology.	.87
I feel my personal life is being invaded due to social media technology.	.86
Social media induced- technostress- Complexity (Tarafdar et al., 2014)	
I do not know enough about social media technology to handle my job satisfactorily.	.84
I need a long time to understand and use new technologies (i.e. social media).	.85
I do not find enough time to study and upgrade my technology skills.	.80
I find new recruits to this organization know more about social media technology than I do.	.81
I often find it more complex for me to understand and use social media technology.	.90
Social media induced- technostress- Insecurity (Tarafdar et al., 2014)	
I feel a constant threat to my job security due to new social media technologies.	.83
I have to constantly upgrade my skills to avoid being replaced.	.73
I am threatened by co-workers with newer social media technology skills.	.85
I do not share my knowledge with co- workers for fear of being replaced.	.78
I feel there is less sharing of knowledge among co-workers for fear of being replaced.	.83
Social Selling (Agnihotri et al., 2017; Tranor et al, 2013) (modified)	
I use social media to monitor event performance and visibility in the industry.	.69
I use social media to maintain regular contact and constantly communicate with current customers.	.71
I use social media to monitor competitors.	.70
I use all capabilities of social media in the best fashion to help me to target new customers (prospecting).	.72
I use social media as a cold online messaging.	.81
I use social media to its fullest for supporting my own work such as obtaining referrals to other potential prospects.	.72
My use of social media is pretty much integrated as part of my normal work routine.	.62
Organizational competences social media (Guesalaga, 2016)	
My organization has communicated a social media usage policy to me.	.76
My (total) organization has a social media strategy.	.80
I have received sufficient training from my organization on using social media.	.69