

Flow Among Salesperson and Ethical Selling Behaviour: An Empirical Examination Among Sales Force in India¹

Abstract

The sales profession has always been subjected to criticism and discontentment mainly due to it alleged unethical tactics to pursue customers (Hair et al 2009, Hansen and Riggle 2009). A study on ethical selling behaviour of salesperson shows that at least 50 percent would have mislead or withheld information from their customer (Strout 2002). Several such studies explored the factors that influence the ethical selling behaviour (Honeycutt et al., 2001, Ross and Robertson, 2003, Barnett and Valentine, 2004; Roma'n and Munuera, 2005; Murphy, 2004, McClaren 2013). Although the sales management literature acknowledged different influencers leading to ethical selling behaviour, little empirical research is evident to identify what happens when a salesperson is in a state of Flow. This study attempts to fill the void. When in flow, we propose, a salesperson exhibits intense concentration and involvement that may influence their ethical selling behaviour.

Method

The sample for this study consisted of pharmaceutical sales representative working in different MNC in India. A total of 163 responses were collected, of which 42 had to be dropped due to missing information. Finally, a usable sample of 122 was obtained. The respondents consisted of 97 percent males and 3 percent females with an average work experience between 2 to 5 years. The survey instrument used items that were borrowed from pre-existing scales in literature along with few demographic characteristics. Flow was measured using scale developed by (Bakker 2008). Salesperson information sharing scale were adapted from knowledge sharing scale by (Lin 2007b). Ethical selling behaviour was measured using the scale adapted from Roman (2003).

Major Research Findings

As hypothesized, this study shows how Flow among salesperson influences information sharing and ethical selling behaviour. There was a positive association between Flow and information sharing as well as Flow and ethical selling behaviour. The relationship between information sharing and ethical selling behaviour among salesperson was also significant. Our study also found out that information sharing mediated the relationship between Flow and ethical selling behaviour. Overall, our findings have important implications for both research and practitioners in the sales domain. Our study shows that salespersons experiencing a Flow state improves information sharing and ethical selling behaviour. The boundary spanning role of salesperson makes it pivotal to share information with customers as well as exhibit ethical behaviour in order to maintain strong relationships. The state of Flow will definitely help salespersons to improve such behaviour.

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