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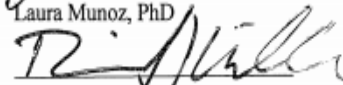
The Importance of Delayed Gratification in B2B Sales

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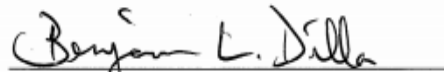
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**THE IMPORTANCE OF DELAYED GRATIFICATION IN B2B SALES**

by

Sergio R. Robledo

Presented to the Faculty of

The University of Dallas in Partial Fulfillment

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for the Degree of

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **THE IMPORTANCE OF DELAYED GRATIFICATION IN B2B SALES**

Salespeople play a pivotal role in organizations as they are responsible for revenue streams. Finding the qualities that increase salespeople's probability to perform at high levels when selling in a business to business environment, and how such qualities influence them to want to remain in the organization, are very important questions for companies. Delayed gratification is an important self-regulation construct that provides salespeople with the ability to develop long-term relationships with buyers that will increase business opportunities for both organizations. Establishing the relationships between delayed gratification, performance, and intentions to leave is the main objective of this research. Additionally, finding how two of the Big Five personality traits, conscientiousness and neuroticism, influence the individual's propensity to exercise delayed gratification is a secondary objective of this study. While sales performance and salespeople intentions to leave have been analyzed from several perspectives, to date, no research has been done to relate delayed gratification ability to these two constructs for salespeople. A similar endeavor for this research is how personal traits relate to salespeople's delayed gratification. A field study will be employed to empirically test the four hypotheses that support the relationship between delayed gratification and performance, intentions to leave, conscientiousness, and neuroticism for salespeople.

*Keywords:* Delayed gratification, performance, intentions to leave, personal traits, conscientiousness, neuroticism

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Report of Final Dissertation Defense</b> .....	i
<b>Completed by the Dissertation Committee</b> .....	i
ABSTRACT.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ix
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....	xii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xiii
CHAPTER 1 .....	15
CHAPTER 2 .....	20
2.1 Delayed Gratification.....	21
2.2 Personality traits.....	28
2.3 Performance .....	32
2.4 Intentions to leave .....	36
2.5 Hypotheses Development .....	39
CHAPTER 3 .....	44
3.1 Research Design.....	44
3.2 Collection Source.....	45

3.3 Sample size requirements .....	45
3.4 Data analysis method selection.....	46
3.5 Measurements .....	47
3.6 Limitations .....	50
CHAPTER 4 .....	51
4.1 Data Properties.....	51
4.1.1 Sample composition.....	51
4.1.2 Data analysis.....	53
4.1.3. Sample characteristics.....	54
4.1.4. Sample validation.....	55
4.2 Measurement Model Evaluation.....	59
4.2.1 Internal consistency .....	59
4.2.2 Convergent validity.....	60
4.2.3 Discriminant validity.....	62
4.3 Structural Model Evaluation.....	66
4.3.1 Common method variance (CMV) .....	67
4.3.2 Model relationships relevance ( $\beta$ ).....	68
4.3.3 Overall model predictive power ( $R^2$ ).....	69
4.3.4 Effect size ( $f^2$ ).....	69

4.3.5 Predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ).....	70
4.3.6 Effect size ( $q^2$ ).....	71
4.3.7 Goodness-of-fit.....	72
4.4 Hypotheses Testing.....	72
4.4.1 Hypothesis 1.....	72
4.4.2 Hypothesis 2.....	73
4.4.3 Hypothesis 3.....	73
4.4.4 Hypothesis 4.....	74
4.4.5 Control variables.....	77
4.5 Summary of Results.....	77
CHAPTER 5.....	79
5.1 Discussion of Results.....	79
5.2 Implications for Theory.....	84
5.3 Implications for Practice.....	85
5.4 Limitations and Future Research.....	86
5.5 Conclusion.....	87
REFERENCES.....	89
APPENDIX A.....	128

## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1. Research model .....	43
Figure 2. Structural model results.....	76

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Constructs Associated to Delayed Gratification.....	24
Table 2. Delayed Gratification Dimensions.....	27
Table 3. Summary of the major constructs that affect sales performance .....	34
Table 4. Summary of construct measurements.....	49
Table 5. Sample characteristics. Descriptive Statistics.....	55
Table 6. Sample comparison.....	58
Table 7. Results Summary for Reflective Measurements.....	63
Table 8. Discriminant Validity .....	66
Table 9. Collinearity Values .....	68
Table 10. Predictive Power of the Model .....	70
Table 11. Effect size ( $f^2$ ) .....	71
Table 12. Significance Testing Results of the Structural Path Coefficients.....	75
Table 13. Control Variables.....	77
Table 14. Delayed Gratification Survey .....	128
Table 15. Conscientiousness Survey.....	129
Table 16. Neuroticism Survey .....	130
Table 17. Sales Performance Survey .....	131
Table 18. Intentions to Leave Survey .....	131
Table 19. Organizational Commitment Survey .....	132

Table 20. Overall Job Satisfaction Survey..... 132

Table 21. Time Orientation Survey ..... 133

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

Salespeople hold a pivotal role in organizations, impacting areas such as existing sales, customer relationships, and future sales McFarland, Rode, and Shervani (2016). In many cases, salespeople even constitute the primary marketing tool for organizations, as they are responsible for creating the link between the organization and their customers in business to business (B2B) settings (Baldauf & Cravens, 2002). Companies with effective salespeople have a greater chance of achieving their sales goals and objectives, which is key to succeeding in today's competitive business landscape (Cron, Baldauf, Leigh, & Grossenbacher, 2014). Due to such importance, organizations have the ongoing challenge of successfully managing their sales resources to grow market share, sales, and profitability (Reinartz, Thomas, & Kumar, 2005; Schweidel, Fader, & Bradlow, 2008).

High performance salespeople maximize revenues and identify new revenue streams, becoming a source of competitive advantage for the organization (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2006). Based on the important role that salespeople play in the organization, performance management for salespeople thus becomes a key enterprise activity (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2006; Churchill Jr, Ford, Hartley, & Walker Jr, 1985; Ingram, LaForge, Avila, Schwepker Jr, & Williams, 2004) Companies with a comprehensive performance management process provide salespeople with the necessary tools to better perform their role (Chen, Peng, & Hung, 2015).

The reasons why salespeople perform at high levels have been a focus of much research (Anderson & Oliver, 1987; Babakus, Cravens, Grant, Ingram, & LaForge, 1996; Verbeke, Dietz, & Verwaal, 2011). Some authors such as Churchill Jr et al. (1985), and Ford, Walker Jr, Churchill Jr, and Hartley (1987) have concluded that aptitude, role perception, motivation, personality, and organizational factors are some of the key elements that influence sales performance. In addition, Rentz, Shepherd, Tashchian, Dabholkar, and Ladd (2002) found two main areas of sales skills that are positively related to performance: micro skills and macro skills. Micro skills are divided into three dimensions: technical skills, or knowing the products/services; salesmanship skills, or knowing how to sell concepts and ideas; and interpersonal skills or knowing how to cope and resolve conflicts. Macro skills focus on knowledge-related capacities for salespeople, such as information management and understanding different sales scenarios. In their meta-analysis, Verbeke et al. (2011) defined five dimensions that show significant correlation with sales performance: selling knowledge, role ambiguity, adaptation, work engagement, and cognitive aptitude. Verbeke et al. (2011) concluded that most of the studies led to similar findings as they did similar analysis but grouped and named these dimensions differently. Ultimately, although researchers have studied salespeople and their performance from several angles, there is still a need for additional research to better understand the specific behaviors (the combinations of micro and macro skills) that support high levels of performance for salespeople, as it is important for an organization's success to ensure that competent salespeople can be motivated, properly trained, and retained.

Along with performance, companies must focus on reduction of salespeople turnover (Buciuniene & Skudiene, 2009; Griffeth & Hom, 2001). Turnover is one of the key factors that negatively influences sales performance, customer loyalty, and other unpredicted expenses



(Buciuniene & Skudiene, 2009). Salespeople turnover has a direct cost to companies of about 200% of the salesperson's salary by means of hiring and training costs (Griffeth & Hom, 2001); that percentage could be much higher when indirect costs are considered (Boles, Dudley, Onyemah, Rouzies, & Weeks, 2012). Such indirect costs are significant because, in the B2B sales environment, the relationship between the buyer and the salespeople is usually stronger than the relationship between the buyer and the selling company (Palmatier, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 2007). This issue is exacerbated as new hires require time to develop such relationships (DeConinck & Johnson, 2009). Dudley and Goodson (1988) found that companies that have high salespeople turnover rates could face difficulties attracting talent due to the company's poor reputation for employee satisfaction. Thus, in order to reduce turnover, companies need to address reasons why employees leave; several studies have found that intentions to leave is the most accurate way to predict actual turnover (Kaya, Aydin, & Ayhan, 2016; Li, Lee, Mitchell, Hom, & Griffeth, 2016; Weeks & Sen, 2016).

When researching intentions to leave, lack of organizational commitment has been one of the most consistent findings (Brown & Peterson, 1993; Johnston, Parasuraman, Futrell, & Black, 1990; Moore, 2000). The less committed that individuals are to a company, the more distant they will be, which will increase their likelihood of leaving the company (Johnston et al., 1990). Intention to leave have been studied for different professions, but there is a gap in researching intentions to leave in sales, particularly the specific personality traits and abilities that make salespeople act on, or delay, such intentions to leave. Therefore, understanding salespeople's intentions to leave is important for organizations to remain competitive by retaining high performers and reducing costs associated with people leaving the company (Lewin & Sager, 2010).

Intentions to leave have also been related to personality traits, such as conscientiousness, openness to experience, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, career self-efficacy, and career commitment (Gumussoy, 2016; Woo, Chae, Jebb, & Kim, 2016). Research has found that based on their orientation towards gratification (immediate or delayed), people will show a different response to their intentions to leave an organization (García-Chas, Neira-Fontela, & Castro-Casal, 2014). Because delayed gratification is based on the ability to establish effective self-management of goals and objectives (Mischel & Ayduk, 2004), it becomes paramount for long sales cycles, where salespeople need to have the patience to properly develop the sale (Tice, Bratslavsky, & Baumeister, 2001). Buyers need to feel that salespeople understand the importance of finding the appropriate solution and to ensure the buyer's needs are met instead of rushing into a solution merely because it is time to close the sale. Therefore, delayed gratification becomes a key trait for salespeople in B2B. Delayed gratification has yet to be studied to learn how it affects salespeople's intentions to leave, thus creating a gap in the literature.

In studying delayed gratification, the role of personality traits must also be regarded. Extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness and neuroticism are considered the basic dimensions of personality (McCrae & Costa, 1987; Thoresen, Bradley, Bliese, & Thoresen, 2004). An additional contribution of this study is to find how two of the Big Five Personality traits (Tupes & Christal, 1961), neuroticism and conscientiousness, affect delayed gratification. Neuroticism and conscientiousness have shown a significant relationship with aspects of self-management such as goal setting and goal striving (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Judge & Ilies, 2002). Neuroticism and conscientiousness also enable delayed gratification, or the lack of it, but to date there is no work showing how such personality traits affect salespeople's relationship to

delayed gratification. This study will explore the relation between conscientiousness and neuroticism and their influence in delaying gratification for salespeople.

This study also builds on the existing delayed gratification literature to be able to understand its relationship with salespeople. To date, delayed gratification has not been widely studied for business, and it has not been studied at all in the B2B sales context. Therefore, the main contribution this research brings is to study whether delayed gratification has an influence on performance and intentions to leave among salespeople. Furthermore, this study addresses whether neuroticism and conscientiousness, two of the Big Five Personality traits, influence delayed gratification. The question this research is looking to answer is: "To what extent do neuroticism and conscientiousness influence delayed gratification?" The results of this study will have important theoretical and managerial implications to further understand how to attract, motivate, and retain high performing salespeople.

This paper is structured as follows. First, a literature review is provided, where the constructs are defined in greater detail, as well as their relationships, this provides the basis to develop the study hypotheses. Then, a methodology section is presented, where the specifics of the sample will be defined, as well as how each one of the constructs will be measured and which tools will be used to measure and interpret the data. Next, the results section provides an explanation of how the results from the study relate to the hypotheses. Finally, the last section will be dedicated to discussing what conclusion can be drawn from the field results, limitations of the study as well as avenues for future research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Salespeople's performance has been the focus of a plethora of research, as it has been associated with several constructs through either direct or indirect relationships (Anderson & Oliver, 1987; Churchill Jr et al., 1985; Verbeke et al., 2011). To achieve superior sales performance, organizations need individuals with high levels of skills and knowledge (Hitt, Bierman, Shimizu, & Kochhar, 2001; McMahan & Harris, 2013; Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005). Sales performance is considered a multidimensional construct, which means that high performance is achieved by using several skills and capabilities together (Campbell, 2012; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002; Stone-Romero, Alvarez, & Thompson, 2009), and research in the area has found that it results from applying individual behaviors that are above and beyond the salesperson's described roles and responsibilities (Borman, Penner, Allen, & Motowidlo, 2001; Hoffman, Blair, Meriac, & Woehr, 2007).

Individual behaviors are the actions employees display in reaction to the environment they are facing (Minton, 2013). One such behavior is self-management, also known as self-control, which is defined as the tactics that individuals use to control their decision making and achieve their desired outcome (Cooper, Heron, & Heward, 2007). Frayne and Geringer (2000) found that self-management is an important characteristic of successful salespeople. In a B2B setting, salespeople's behaviors are key to achieving a high level of customer satisfaction and loyalty, since such behaviors show and deliver value to a company's customers (Cannon &

Perreault Jr, 1999; Palmatier et al., 2007), as well as build customer trust (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990; Palmatier et al., 2007). Self-management is based on the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), which states that behaviors result from the interaction of three main variables: cognitive, environmental and behavioral (Akers, 1986). The combination of these variables creates conditions to meet the desired outcome (Bandura, 1977). Research has established a positive relationship between self-management and performance; Gerhardt, Ashenbaum, and Newman (2009), in their study of sales executives at a large logistics brokerage organization, found a positive relationship between self-management and performance. Frayne and Geringer (2000) found that self-management improves performance in their study involving insurance salespeople; Porath and Bateman (2006) also found positive relationship between self-management (goal setting and self-regulation) and performance in their study of salespeople for a multinational computer and services company. Finally, Gerhardt et al. (2009) positively related self-management with performance in their research using undergraduate students in a Midwestern university.

## **2.1 Delayed Gratification**

Individuals need to exercise self-management to restrain the impulse of obtaining a proximal reward (Tice et al., 2001). Self-management behaviors have several dimensions, such as self-assessment, goal setting, self-monitoring, time management, self-evaluation, and self-regulation (Frayne & Geringer, 2000). One of the dimensions of self-management, self-regulation, is the prime focus of this paper. Self-regulation mechanisms allow a person to adapt his or her behaviors to meet the demands of the environment (Doerr & Baumeister, 2010). An important component of self-regulation is how individuals manage their goals, plans, and hopes (Nuttin, 2014). To manage goals and objectives, people need to control their gratification

impulses, and they can do this by using willpower as part of their self-regulation mechanisms (Renn, Allen, & Huning, 2011). Still, individuals react differently when trying to obtain rewards; some prefer immediate benefits, while others can delay such rewards, if it serves a more important goal in the future (Bandura, 1977; Mischel & Ayduk, 2004). Delayed gratification, a part of the larger construct of resistance to temptation, is one of the components of self-regulation (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2005; Tobin & Graziano, 2006).

Delayed gratification is correlated with the resistance to receive an immediate reward in favor of receiving a greater reward at a later time (Mischel, 1973). It is a self-imposed mechanism that helps to keep the focus on a longer-term goal (Mischel, Shoda, & Rodriguez, 1989). Liu, Wang, and Jiang (2013) argued that delayed gratification is divided in two phases: abandoning the “temptation” of taking the “easier” reward, and waiting for a better reward. For this paper, delayed gratification is defined as the latter phase with different processes (motivational and cognitive) that result in an ability to select a future goal instead of an immediate one (Graziano & Tobin, 2013).

For B2B salespeople, delayed gratification is an important trait as they may jeopardize the closing of a sale if they try to close it too soon, or “leave money on the table” by not tapping into additional possibilities if they had waited (Cherniss, Goleman, Emmerling, Cowan, & Adler, 1998). However, delayed gratification has not been widely studied for sales or even in general for business. The extend studies have positively related it to organization constructs, such as performance (Thoresen et al., 2004); intentions to leave (García-Chas et al., 2014); organizational commitment (Witt, 1990); job satisfaction (Wolf, 1970); turnover (Renn, Steinbauer, & Fenner, 2014); ; ethics (McCuddy & Peery, 1996), and creativity (Liu et al., 2013). Even less research has been done to find out how personality traits are related to delayed

gratification. (Witt, 1990) empirically confirmed that people with high degrees of organizational commitment and satisfaction could effectively delay gratification when it would benefit organizational goals. Renn et al. (2011) did an empirical study with counselors in the United States to define how personality traits affected delayed gratification and its relationship to goals. Among the findings was that neuroticism and conscientiousness are positively related to the inability to delay gratification. They also found that delayed gratification has a positive relationship with achieving personal goals. Delayed gratification has also been related to ethical consistency and orientation (McCuddy & Peery, 1996). In economics, delayed gratification has been studied in relation to delayed discounting (Cheng, Shein, & Chiou, 2012).

Delayed gratification also has been studied in the medical field for psychoanalysis and behavioral issues such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) (Rodriguez-Jimenez et al., 2006); obesity (Kuo, Lee, & Chiou, 2016); and addictions (Song, Larose, Eastin, & Lin, 2004), such as gambling, alcohol and drugs (Tice & Bratslavsky, 2000). Table 1 shows the main areas where delayed gratification has been researched.

Table 1

*Constructs Associated to Delayed Gratification*

Constructs related to delayed gratification	Relevant Studies
Academic Behavior	Bembenutty & Karabenick (1998)
Addictions	Song, Larose, Eastin & Lin (2004)
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	Rodriguez-Jimenez, et al., (2006)
Consideration of future consequences	Strathman, Gleicher, Boninger, & Edwards (1994)
Debt	Norvilitis & MacLean (2006)
Delay-discounting	Kirby, Petry, & Bickel (1999)
Drug use	Tice & Bratslavsky (2000)
Gambling behavior	Parke, Griffiths, & Irwing (2004)
Individual Differences	McCuddy & Peery (1996)
Job Performance	Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth (2002)
Life satisfaction	Caldwell & Mowrer (1998)
Organizational commitment and job satisfaction	Witt (1990a)
Self-control	Muraven & Baumeister (2000)
Self-efficacy	Rosenbaum & Ben-Ari Smira (1986)
Social responsibility	Witt (1990b)
Weight control	Kuo, Lee, & Chiou (2016)



In their meta-analysis about delayed gratification (Graziano, Tobin, & Hoyle, 2013), highlight important findings from the past fifty years in delayed gratification research. Such learnings from the medical and economics fields help to better understand how delayed gratification can be used in business. The main finding of the meta-analysis is the classification of delayed gratification in five dimensions: a) psychoanalytic and psychodynamic, b) behavioral: S–R version, c) achievement motivation, d) behavioral: social-cognitive version, and e) hot–cool system.

**Psychoanalytic and psychodynamic:** Sigmund Freud has been credited with formalizing the modern scientific research about delayed gratification (Freud, 1922; Metzner, 1963; Sears, 1975; Singer, 1955). Since Freud’s work, delayed gratification has been related to cognitive factors, such as using distracting thoughts to increase the ability to stop immediate gratification actions (Romer, Duckworth, Sznitman, & Park, 2010). Gray (1973) developed Reinforcement Sensitivity Theory (RST), which is based on the relationship between two systems—behavioral inhibition system (BIS) and behavioral approach system (BAS)—and how these systems affect behaviors based on the reward/punishment possibilities. These possibilities include facilitator (BIS–punishment, BAS–reward) and antagonist (BIS–reward, BAS–punishment). The theory explains that individual variation in personality is related to motivation and emotion (Carver, Sutton, & Scheier, 2000; Davidson, 1998; Depue, 2006; Elliot & Thrash, 2002; Gray, 1973; Gray & McNaughton, 2000). Such motivation and emotion create the reward and punishment stages that form the premise of RST (Corr, 2008). The ability to manage rewards and punishments is the essence of delaying gratification; for this reason, RST is an important support for delayed gratification.

**Behavioral: S–R version:** This dimension is based in the stimuli and response that individuals have towards specific situations. With this approach, behaviorists try to explain human reactions to stimuli based not on cognitive variables but on stimulus-response relations (Amsel, 1992; Mowrer & Ullman, 1945; Sears, Maccoby, & Levin, 1957). The behavioral approach S-R version theorizes that delayed gratification can be frustrating, and such frustration can create behaviors that accumulate over time and that eventually diminish delayed gratification capabilities (Tobin & Graziano, 2009).

**Achievement motivation:** This dimension considers that delayed gratification was not properly explained by the psychodynamic or the S-R behavioral approaches (Bandura & Mischel, 1965; Mischel, 1973; Sears, 1975). Instead, an explanation of the gratification tendency can be found in theories related to human behavior. Need for achievement is the central construct for this dimension, which is empirically related to the preference for delayed rewards, occupational aspirations, and acceptance (Mischel, 1961).

**Behavioral: social-cognitive version:** Social Learning Theory (SLT) posits that social behavior does not need a direct reinforcement to be learned but can be absorbed via observational learning (Bandura, 1977). This theory, mediated by memory and attention, accounts for the largest number of delayed gratification studies in the past 50 years (Tobin & Graziano, 2009). Despite the above argumentation, Mischel and Ebbesen (1970) found that attention to a future goal could undermine delayed gratification. Mischel (1973) proposed that affect-cognition analysis would better support delayed gratification instead of attention analysis.

**The hot-cool system:** Metcalfe and Mischel (1999) proposed a dual system approach to explain delayed gratification. This approach is about self-control management and has a hot and cool component. The hot component is related to emotions such as fear and passion, which

makes it an impulsive and reflexive stage with very little self-control. Whilst, the cool system houses the cognitive, strategic, and control elements, making this dimension high on self-control. These two systems explain why past research needed to have several dimensions to explain how and when delayed gratification happens (Metcalf & Mischel, 1999). Block (2002) has criticized this approach as he considers that there is not enough differentiation with the other four dimensions, particularly the psychoanalytic and psychodynamic.

The main conclusion of the meta-analysis is that there is still additional research that needs to be done to better understand and classify delayed gratification. Table 2 shows the summary of the five delayed gratification dimensions and some articles that have empirically proved the relationship between delayed gratification and the specific dimension definition. This study will focus on the cognitive aspects of delayed gratification.

Table 2

*Delayed Gratification Dimensions*

Dimension	Relevant Studies that empirical probe the dimension
Psychoanalytic	Singer (1955); Miller & Karniol (1976)
Behavioral (Stimulus-Response)	Sears, Macoby, & Levin (1957); Amsel (1992); Mischel et al. (1972); Putnam et al. (2002); Mischel & More (1973); Nisan (1974)
Achievement motivation	Mischel (1961); Mischel & Gilligan (1964)
Cognitive-behavioral	Mischel & Ebssen, (1970); More et al. (1976); Mauro & Harris (2000); Moore et al. (1976); Yates & Mischel (1979)
Hot-Cool System	Metcalf & Mischel (1999); Mischel & Ayduk (2002); Hongwanishkul et al. (2005)

In addition to these five dimensions, traditional control variables, such as age, nationality, and gender have been studied to better understand how they affect delayed gratification. For most of these control variables, there is a mixed record of impact associated with delayed gratification. Age seems to influence the ability to delay gratification, as children under 7 years old are much more prone to search for immediate gratification (Mischel et al., 1989). Furthermore, in longitudinal studies, scholars have found that children between 4 and 7 years old who demonstrate the ability to delay gratification have been linked with better coping abilities and stress management, as well as a better success rate with pursuing long-term goals (Mischel, Shoda, & Peake, 1988; Shoda, Mischel, & Peake, 1990). Regarding gender, research has not shown any significant difference between males and females (Tobin & Graziano, 2009). In their study involving undergraduate business students of three countries (China, US and Mexico), (Spears, Lin, & Mowen, 2000) found that a country's time orientation culture influences delayed gratification tendencies.

## **2.2 Personality traits**

According to (Roberts, 2009), "Personality traits are the relatively enduring patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that reflect the tendency to respond in certain ways under certain circumstances" (p. 140). Multiple research has grouped personality traits into five broad categories (Furnham, 2008; Magnusson, Anderson, & Törestad, 1993; McCrae, Costa Jr, Del Pilar, Rolland, & Parker, 1998; Ryckman, 2004). The Big Five groupings are the result of several interactions of personality traits, starting with (Fiske, 1949) work, and then using the terminology provided by Goldberg (1981). The Big Five personality traits are Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, and Openness to Experience (Digman, 1990;

Goldberg, 1993). The main advantage of the Big Five factors is the way such factors have been grouped and the depth of the traits included in each (Barrick & Mount, 1991; John & Srivastava, 1999). These selected factors include many correlated but distinct lower level dimensions or traits. When studying these five factors in different cultures, contexts and even over time, their significance and relevance has been consistent (McCrae et al., 1998).

The Big Five personality traits provide a framework that has been used to establish the relationship between each of them and performance in different fields (Hogan & Holland, 2003; Hurtz & Donovan, 2000; Salgado, 1997). Such traits have also been associated with career success, job satisfaction (Judge, Heller, & Mount, 2002), job performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991), leadership (Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002), and performance motivation (Judge & Ilies, 2002). Further, research has proven that some personality dimensions are related to behaviors found in autonomous jobs. For instance, extraversion and conscientiousness have a stronger relationship with jobs that require high autonomy, such as B2B sales (Barrick & Mount, 1993).

Vinchur, Schippmann, Switzer, and Roth (1998) conducted a meta-analysis to investigate the relationship between the Big 5 personality traits and salespeople's performance, as these positions demand high levels of autonomy and self-management. The meta-analysis found that conscientiousness is a strong predictor of sales success. The meta-analysis focused on achievement, a dimension of consciousness, as it was found to be positively related to sales performance having a validity coefficient of 0.41. Furthermore, researchers concur that conscientiousness is the strongest Big Five performance predictor based on its relationship with task completion and ability to create relationships (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Salgado, 1997). An additional dimension of the Big Five, low neuroticism (emotional stability), has a positive

relationship with performance (Furnham & Fudge, 2008). In their research, Mount, Barrick, and Stewart (1998) found that low neuroticism also has a positive association with performance for activities that require interaction.

**Conscientiousness** is defined as the act of adapting to and following social norms, as well as having a high goal orientation and patience level. In other words, it is the ability to act consistently, independent of the specifics of the situation (Roberts, Jackson, Fayard, Edmonds & Meints, 2009). Conscientiousness includes several qualities, such as having a sense of order, being cautious and careful, and having strong planning skills (Robertson, Baron, Gibbons, MacIver, & Nyfield, 2000). Additionally, conscientiousness includes being dependable, result oriented, responsible, and focusing on the task at hand (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Individuals with high levels of conscientiousness are not impulsive, as they analyze the facts before acting (Sharma & Saxena, 2014). For some other characteristics, there is a debate as to whether they belong to conscientiousness or are part of other personality dimensions. For example, (Costa & McCrae, 1992) considered achievement part of the core of conscientiousness characteristics. However, (Hogan, Hogan, & Roberts, 1996) believed that such attributes instead belong to openness. Costa and McCrae (1992) related conscientiousness with competence, dutifulness, desire to achieve, deliberation, and sales-discipline. In a different study, Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2003) found that goal-focus, efficiency, perseverance, and achievement orientation have a significant relationship with conscientiousness. Sharma and Saxena (2014) found that individuals who can self-regulate and focus their impulses toward achievement show high levels of conscientiousness.

Individuals with lower levels of conscientiousness have strong tendencies to be negligent, careless, and unreliable (Hogan et al., 1996). Low conscientiousness is related to failure to delay

gratification as it is associated with low levels of deliberation, competence, and reasonableness, and with lack of order, weak self-discipline, and procrastination (Baumeister, 2002; Funder & Ozer, 1983). Individuals with low conscientiousness typically demonstrate a lack of self-discipline and the inability to plan, making it more difficult for such employees to focus on longer term rewards versus immediate gratification (Mischel & Ayduk, 2004).

**Neuroticism** encompasses characteristics such as depression, self-consciousness, and lack of confidence, impulsiveness, hostility, insecurity, and anxiety (Judge & Bono, 2001). Neurotics typically show a pessimistic perspective by focusing on the negative aspects of themselves and others (Roelofs, Huibers, Peeters, Arntz, & van Os, 2008). Because of this outlook, neurotics are likely to experience depression and vulnerability (Costa & McCrae, 1985). Also, their mood fluctuates, which creates insecurities (Feist, 1998). Such lack of confidence and stability makes neurotics less likely to achieve their goals and objectives (Elliot, Sheldon, & Church, 1997; Xu & Brucks, 2011).

Individuals who express the opposite of neuroticism show control over their emotions, defined as emotional stability (Sharma & Saxena, 2014). This type of behavior is based on resilience, temperament, self-confidence, and stress tolerance, making individuals with these traits highly satisfied with themselves. Emotional stability is also related to creativity, as creativity requires the ability to integrate information efficiently, and is achieved through a calm demeanor and self-confidence (Sung & Choi, 2009). These types of behaviors are the basis for self-regulation (Renn et al., 2011).

As these two personality traits, conscientiousness and low neuroticism, have already been related to performance by several researchers, this study will focus on how they affect self-regulation mechanisms, which will increase salespeople's ability to delay gratification.

### **2.3 Performance**

Salespeople are responsible for customer relationship management, which implies that they need to understand, create, communicate and deliver value to the customer (Paparoidamis & Guenzi, 2009; Weitz & Bradford, 1999). For a long time, researchers have acknowledged the importance of performance for the sales profession (Agnihotri, Vieira, Senra, & Gabler, 2016; Churchill Jr et al., 1985; Goad & Jaramillo, 2014; Verbeke et al., 2011; Vinchur et al., 1998). An area of special attention has been in the specific behaviors that allow salespeople to be successful in the different sales scenarios that they face in the B2B environment (Fang, Palmatier, & Evans, 2004; Rapp, Agnihotri, & Forbes, 2008). Scholars have studied sales performance based on the outcome it produces, such as market share, revenue generation, and ability to accomplish sales goals (Park & Holloway, 2003; Rapp et al., 2008).

The relationship between buyers and sellers is complex and interdependent (Autry, Williams, & Moncrief, 2013; Chakrabarty, Brown, & Widing II, 2013). Both sellers and buyers are constantly experimenting with strategies to develop long lasting mutually beneficial relationships (Gonzalez, Hoffman, & Ingram, 2005; Morgan & Hunt, 1994), known as adaptive selling strategies. It was defined by (Weitz, Sujan, & Sujan, 1986) as “the altering of sales behaviors during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation” (p. 175). Previously, (Weitz, 1981) suggested that personal differences and situational factors affect the relationship between salespeople and performance. This suggestion was empirically supported by Franke and Park (2006). Furthermore, salespeople’s cognitive ability influences their performance based on their learning from previous experiences (Jones, Chonko, & Roberts, 2003). Therefore, salespeople



with higher cognitive ability tend to obtain better sales results by better understanding customer needs and being able to overcome their objections (Rapp et al., 2008).

Numerous studies of sales research have been conducted to define the characteristics of successful salespeople (Churchill Jr et al., 1985; Goad & Jaramillo, 2014; Verbeke et al., 2011; Vinchur et al., 1998). The results have shown that a combination of individual traits and specific behaviors determine success. Research has found that motivation, role, skills level, job perception, goal orientation, and aptitude are the most important aspects that affect sales performance (Churchill Jr et al., 1985). This study will focus on how such aspects affect delayed gratification and how it affects salespeople's performance. While little research has been published to relate delayed gratification to sales performance, plenty of work has been done to demonstrate how individuals have used behaviors and personal traits to achieve high performance. Table 3 shows a summary of the major constructs that affect sales performance.

Table 3

*Summary of the major constructs that affect sales performance*

Main construct related to performance	Construct definition	Relationship to Performance	Sample	Study
Adaptive Selling	The ability of the salespeople to effectively modify their sales approach based on the specific sales situation (Hughes, Le Bon, and Rapp 2013)	Positive	Meta-analytic analysis of 126, 790 salesperson responses	Goad, & Jaramillo (2014)
Burnout	<i>"A prolonged response to chronic emotional and interpersonal stressors on the job"</i> (Maslach 2001, p 397)	Negative	245 Real Sate Sales Professionals in the US	Pettijohn, Schaefer, & Burnett (2014)
Cognitive Intelligence	It is the capability that allows salespeople to learn, solve problems, reason, think abstractly, and comprehend complex situations	Positive	62 Financial Executives in the US	Boyatzis, Good, & Massa (2012)
Customer Orientation	It is defined as "concern for others" when solving selling problems (Saxe and Weitz, 1982)	Positive	Meta-analytic analysis of 126, 790 salesperson responses	Goad, & Jaramillo (2014)
Emotional Intelligence	It is the ability to understands one's feelings and emotions as well as others, and act accordingly (Salovey and Mayer (1990)	Positive	62 Financial Executives in the US	Boyatzis, Good, & Massa (2012)
Employee Engagement	When an employee is committed to the organization strategy and goals	Positive	426 Salespeople in the US	Medlin, & Green (2009)
Goal Orientation	It is represented by three dimensions: 1) Learning; 2) Performance-prove; 3) Performance-avoid (VandeWalle, 1997)	Positive	88 Salespeople in the US	Porath, & Bateman (2006)
Identity	Salespeople will role identity, consider themselves sale consultants and not technical specialists (Steward, Hutt, Walter, & Kumar, 2009)	Positive	60 Salespeople and managers from Fortune 100 High technology firms	Steward, Hutt, Walker, & Kuma (2009)
Motivation	The internal drive salespeople need to be able to perform their jobs in three main dimensions: 1) Initial effort; 2) Amount of effort required; 3) Perseverance to achieve the goals (Fu, 2015)	Positive	175 Salespeople in the US	Miao, Evans, & Shaoming (2007)

Role Ambiguity	The uncertainty level that salespeople have about how to best fulfill their job (Berhman and Perreault, 1984)	Negative	245 Real Sate Sales Professionals in the US	Pettijohn, Schaefer, & Burnett (2014)
Role Autonomy	The ability to define the specifics of their task to perform their sales activities (Wang and Netemeyer, 2002)	Positive	245 Real Sate Sales Professionals in the US	Pettijohn, Schaefer, & Burnett (2014)
Role Conflict	When salespeople have multiple options to perform their job, but are unable to find one that satisfy all the stakeholders (Onyemah, 2008)	Negative	1290 Salespeople from different industries based globally (Africa, Europe, Americas and US)	Onyemah (2008)
Role Overload	When the sales role has to many responsibilities to manage in a reasonable time (Barling, Kelloway, & Frone, 2005)	Negative	530 Salespeople in a retail bank in New Zeeland	Jha, Balaji, Yavas, & Babakus (2017)
Sales Orientation	Is defined as concern for self when solving selling problems, which translates in aggressive selling behaviors (Saxe and Weitz, 1982)	No significant relationship	Meta-analytic analysis of 126, 790 salesperson responses	Goad, & Jaramillo (2014)
Selling Related Knowledge	<i>"The depth and width of the knowledge base that salespeople need to size up sales situations, classify prospects, and select appropriate sales strategies for clients "</i> (Leong et al. 1989, p. 164)	Positive	245 Real Sate Sales Professionals in the US	Verbeke, Dietz, & Verwaal. (2011)
Training	A well -defined program that provides the tools to increase employee skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviors (Wexley & Latham, 1981)	Positive	Meta-analytic analysis of that include 26 companies with samples from 16 to 16,230	Farrell, & Hakstian (2001)

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## 2.4 Intentions to leave

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, scholars (Drucker, 1999; Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001) considered that one of the most significant challenges facing organizations would be employee retention. Recent studies, such as Aggarwal, Tanner Jr, and Castleberry (2004); Fournier, Tanner Jr, Chonko, and Manolis (2010) , have confirmed that it remains a critical organizational issue. Retaining high performing salespeople has proven to be a major area of concern for managers (Boles et al., 2012). Based on the important role that salespeople have in organizations, understanding why salespeople voluntarily leave the organization remains a key area of company concern (Darmon, 2008; Jones, Chonko, Rangarajan, & Roberts, 2007; Pettijohn, Pettijohn, & Taylor, 2008). In fact, García Rivera and Rivas Tovar (2007) considers that sales organizations have the highest turnover rate and it is difficult to find the right sales candidates. In his 11-year longitudinal study (1996-2006) that included 3,700 publicly traded firms in the United States, Hrehocik (2007) found that turnover of salespeople averaged 39 percent annually. Researchers have estimated that the turnover represented an average of three or four times the cost of the annual compensation for salespeople (Hrehocik, 2007; Van Clieaf, 1991). Besides the direct costs of replacing a salesperson, high turnover also can create loss of sales, and a possible short-term decrease in customer service and relationships (Darmon, 2008). Particularly in B2B sales, where the necessary skills to perform successfully change from case to case, it is even more difficult to find and keep high performers (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2006). Boles et al. (2012) issued an invitation for additional research to gain an increased understanding of salespeople retention.

To retain employees, companies need to establish an end-to-end process that begins with recruiting, interviewing, selecting, and hiring the right employees, and then continues with

training, management, and employee development (Arthur & Rousseau, 2001; Lawrence & Ursula, 2003). Additionally, to understand how to retain employees, organizations need to identify the reasons why the salesperson left the company. Scholars have identified the main reasons that influence intentions to leave: job satisfaction; organizational commitment; job search behavior; and economic factors, such as salaries, bonus and benefits (Carsten & Spector, 1987; Locke, 1976; Mobley, Griffeth, Hand, & Meglino, 1979; Spector, 1997) .

If an employee quits his/her job, the first question to be asked is if he/she is a high performer or high potential individual. Based on this, when an organization loses a high performing employee, the turnover is defined as functional. Whereas when the organization loses an employee with mediocre performance, the turnover is considered dysfunctional (Dalton, Krackhardt, & Porter, 1981; Dalton, Todor, & Krackhardt, 1982; Williams, 1999). Certainly, organizations want to keep their top performers, particularly for salespeople. However, (DeConinck, 2011) found that performance and turnover do not have a direct relationship.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) were the first scholars who empirically confirmed that intention to leave is a strong predictor of behavioral intentions. Several scholars subsequently confirmed their findings (Mobley et al., 1979; Mowday, 1981; Steel & Ovalle, 1984). Intention to leave is defined as the employee's desire to move out of his/her existing company to work for a different organization; such intentions could be the result of work, economic, or personal factors (Muchinsky & Morrow, 1980). From a psychological perspective, factors such as developmental, emotional, and motivational needs affect intentions to leave and confirm that employee retention is a complex human resource challenge (Kopelman, Rovenpor, & Millsap, 1992). Each one of these factors consists of analysis, decision making, and an action plan to show the selected behavioral response (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Locke, 1976). One of the main

research conclusions about employee retention is that the attachment employees demonstrate to an organization varies from person to person (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2009; March & Simon, 1958). Scholars have continued studying how an individual's embeddedness in the organization affects their intentions to leave (Lee, Mitchell, Sablinski, Burton, & Holtom, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001). Researchers have also investigated the motivational variables that help employees develop stronger job attachments and reduce their intentions to leave (Maertz & Campion, 2004; Maertz Jr & Griffeth, 2004).

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) developed the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) which focuses on a person's intentions to behave in a specific way in a specific situation. Several scholars (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974; Shore & Martin, 1989; Tett & Meyer, 1993) have applied TRA to explain how job satisfaction affects intentions to leave. The intention to act as proposed by TRA, however, may not always result in action as it is influenced by attitudes towards the specific behavior and subjective norms (Kopelman et al., 1992). TRA is not only about needs and goals; it also focuses on higher-order cognitive processes that affect individual behavior (Doran, Stone, Brief, & George, 1991). Kraut (1975) found that when employees are in the process of quitting their job, they have already started a psychological withdrawal from the organization.

Mobley (1977) developed a model that explains an intention for voluntarily leaving the organization. It starts with job dissatisfaction, then leads to thoughts of quitting, followed by consideration of a new job, the intention to search for a job, and the actual job search. The final step of the model is analysis of new job options that could lead to an intention to leave. It eventually could result in the employee leaving the organization. Lee and Mitchell (1994) see

this process as nonlinear, as people could skip any of the steps based on their personality and specific situation.

Bluedorn (1982) considered an additional process to explain intentions to leave. He called it the Unified Model. It starts with employee dissatisfaction with his/her job, leading to job search and eventually to a decision to stay or not with the organization. While the Unified Model resembles Mobley's model, the main difference is that in the Unified Model, starting the job search is not motivated by job satisfaction but by employee perceptions of future opportunities within his/her actual role (Lawrence & Ursula, 2003).

Since research has not investigated how delayed gratification affects salespeople's intention to leave, this paper will focus on how delayed gratification will affect an employee's intention to leave an organization, with the expectation that future rewards will justify the decision not to act on his/her intentions.

## **2.5 Hypotheses Development**

**Conscientiousness:** Individuals with high levels of conscientiousness are considered competent, goal oriented, self-disciplined, and task oriented (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Judge & Ilies, 2002). Salespeople with such characteristics set ambitious goals and are most likely to stick to their goals and achieve them (Fu, Richards, & Jones, 2009; Neubert, Taggar, & Cady, 2006). Research has shown a positive relationship between conscientiousness and salespeople's performance (Barrick, Mount, & Strauss, 1993; Furnham & Fudge, 2008; Yang, Kim, & McFarland, 2011). Research has also shown that people with lower levels of conscientiousness show weak self-discipline, a lack of order, low competence, and low reasonableness (Baumeister, 2002; Funder & Ozer, 1983). The lack of self-discipline and order do not allow low conscientiousness individuals to control their impulses and resist immediate reward (Baumeister,

2002; Funder & Ozer, 1983; Mischel & Ayduk, 2004). However, delayed gratification is a mechanism, based on self-discipline, that helps individuals to delay an immediate reward for a future one, based on their goals and objectives (Mischel & Ayduk, 2004; Mischel et al., 1989; Renn et al., 2011). Based on this, it is expected a positive relationship exists between conscientiousness and the ability to delay gratification. Therefore:

*H1: A high level of conscientiousness of a salesperson is positively related to delayed gratification.*

**Neuroticism:** Personality factors, such as those found in the Big Five Personality traits, have been related to self-regulation mechanisms (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Judge & Bono, 2001). Neuroticism encompasses several emotions, such as irritability, restlessness, anger, and aggressiveness; these traits contribute to loss of focus on long-term rewards (Funder, Block, & Block, 1983; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Such lack of focus will cause an individual to choose immediate rewards instead of distant ones (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1994; Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999). Particularly in the sales environment, a high level of neuroticism affects salespeople's ability to have patience to wait for the right moment to close the sale. It is expected that individuals who exhibit neuroticism will not show self-control and instead will lack ability to use delayed gratification to achieve their goals and objectives (Renn et al., 2014). This is expected as delayed gratification uses self-regulation mechanisms to be able to increase focus on goals and objectives (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2005; Tobin & Graziano, 2006). Without a strong focus on long-term pursuits, individuals will not be able to exercise delayed gratification (Baumeister et al., 1994; Mischel & Ayduk, 2004; Renn et al., 2011). Therefore:

*H2: A high level of neuroticism of a salesperson is negatively related to delayed gratification.*



**Performance:** The Big Five personality traits have established strong links to performance (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Conte & Gintoft, 2005; Judge & Ilies, 2002; Ones, 2005; Ones, Dilchert, Viswesvaran, & Judge, 2007; Peeters, Van Tuijl, Rutte, & Reymen, 2006; Poropat, 2009; van Doorn & Lang, 2010; Zimmerman, 2008). However, other personality theories can predict performance as well (Barrick, 2005). Research has found that RST (Gray, 1973) is one of those theories that can be related to performance (Diefendorff & Mehta, 2007; Matthews & Gilliland, 1999; Smits & Boeck, 2006; Stewart, 1996). RST is based on behaviors like self-regulation that effectively support performance indicators such as goal achievement and increasing customer satisfaction (Lord, Diefendorff, Schmidt, & Hall, 2010). To achieve their goals, individuals need to use delayed gratification (Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002; Mischel et al., 1989; Renn et al., 2011). This allows employees to reduce impulsiveness and manage their actions to obtain their goals (Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989).

Without self-regulation, employees will not be able to manage their stress, depression, and impulsiveness, which will affect their ability to use delayed gratification (Mischel et al., 1989; Moffitt et al., 2011). Research has found that low self-regulation is associated with poor performance, health, and social outcomes (Moffitt et al., 2011). As such, self-regulation is one of the key attributes of successful salespeople (Chebat & Kollias, 2000; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Krishnan, Netemeyer, & Boles, 2002). Self-regulation has an important role in planning and executing defined goals (Chebat & Kollias, 2000; Renn et al., 2011). Scholars such as Bandura and Locke (2003); Stajkovic and Luthans (1998), have also found a strong relationship between performance and self-regulation in several fields, including the sales environment (Renn & Fedor, 2001; Wang & Netemeyer, 2002). Delayed gratification is one of the components of self-regulation (Doerr & Baumeister, 2010; Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2005; Tobin & Graziano,

2006). Having a strong monitor behavior, such as not being impulsive, has been found as one of the most important aspects of delayed gratification (Baumeister, 2002). For salespeople, it becomes critical to exhibit delayed gratification when selling in a B2B environment to have the patience to close the deal at the right time. Therefore:

*H3: Delayed gratification is positively related to salesperson performance.*

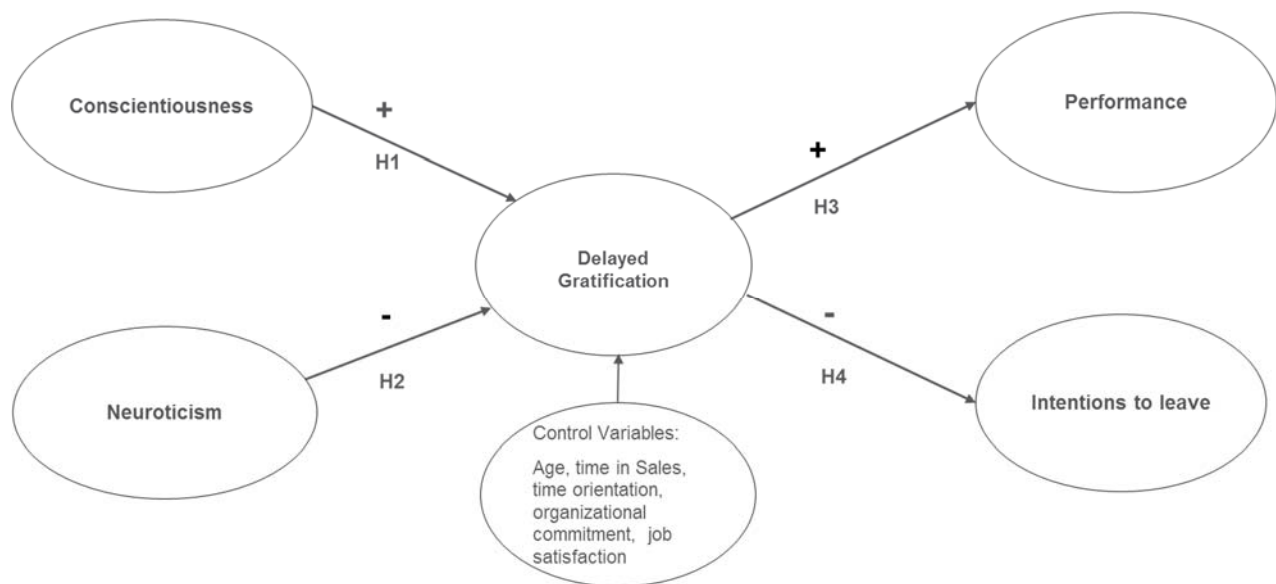
**Intention to leave:** Based on the Unfolding Model of Turnover (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee, & Inderrieden, 2005; Lee & Mitchell, 1991), everyone will react differently to the impulse to leave their job. The model is named unfolding because it is an evolutionary process (Lee & Mitchell, 1991). The model is based on four different reasons that influence an individual's decision to leave an organization (Hulin, Roznowski, & Hachiya, 1985). Three of these reasons are the result of a distressing events that make employee consider leaving the organization: a) the distressing event triggers predefined behaviors or scripts that end in an intention to leave; b) the distressing event affects the image that the employee has of the organization and creates a decision to leave the company, regardless of the job satisfaction level; and c) the distressing event creates an employee's job dissatisfaction, resulting in an evaluation of the job alternatives, which consequently results in leaving the organization when an alternative is found. The fourth reason for leaving the job is not related to a shocking event but to job dissatisfaction which has developed over time (Hulin et al., 1985).

Some individuals will act spontaneously regarding their intention to leave, while others will take time before making such a decision (Lee, Mitchell, Wise, & Fireman, 1996). Furthermore, individuals could develop a "job quitting habit" where they act at the first impulse to leave their job (Ghiselli, 1974; Judge & Watanabe, 1995). Depending on how employees can control their emotions, they will be able to manage their intention to leave the organization

(Bande, Fernández-Ferrín, Varela, & Jaramillo, 2015). Managing their impulses allows individuals to recover a positive affective state and not to react without considering future implications (Bande et al., 2015). People who can delay gratification do not act for the immediate reward but according to their long-term plan (Tice et al., 2001). Delaying gratification allows employees to prioritize their goals and thoughts and not to react to the fluctuation of emotions that happen in the organization; as a consequence, they are able to reduce their intention to leave. Therefore:

*H4: Delayed gratification is negatively related to salespeople's intention to leave their company.*

Based on the above hypotheses, the research model is presented in Figure 1:



*Figure 1. Research model*

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes the study's five-part methodology: (1) research design, where the approach for testing hypotheses will be described; (2) data collection source, highlighting the targeted individuals who will provide information to validate this research; (3) sample size, defining the number of respondents required; (4) data analysis tools, facilitating how to arrange the information received from the respondents; and (5) measurements, which support asking the proper questions to define the research constructs. The last part of this chapter will be dedicated to discussing the expected methodological limitations associated with this study and how to overcome or reduce them.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Based on its systematic approach, a field study will be employed to empirically test the hypotheses. The selected methodological approach for this study is cross-sectional, using a quantitative survey design. This field research strategy does not disturb the "natural" environment, which helps to keep it as "original" as possible (Singleton Jr, Straits, Straits, & McAllister, 1988). Per definition, this strategy offers a high contextual realism, with good precision and control (Burgess, 1984). The generalizability dimension, however, is the weakest one for this approach (Bass & Firestone, 1980).

### **3.2 Collection Source**

The participants will be asked to answer an online questionnaire. This research will be done during the winter of 2018 in the Telecom sector due to the investigator's accessibility to potential contributors. Participants will include salespeople that engage in B2B sales, as this is the focus of the study. The questionnaire will be sent via email and will explain the survey intentions, highlighting that it is voluntary and that the responses will be anonymous. To be able to secure such anonymity, the email will not be captured on the response. Only the researcher will be able to cross-reference the email with the survey password. Additionally, respondents will be told that the survey email list will not be shared, preventing any possible sales solicitations. Before sending the survey, the relevant approval from the University of Dallas Institutional Review Board will be obtained.

### **3.3 Sample size requirements**

Estimating the required sample size is one of the most important steps when doing research (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Quantitative studies usually calculate the sample size by using a power analysis, based on the selected probability of finding significance in the relationships studied (Cohen, 1988). Despite the efforts to make the sample size definition a universal process (Bacchetti, 2002), it still depends on the research context, making it a subjective process (Schulz & Grimes, 2005; Spiegelhalter & Freedman, 1986; Whitley & Ball, 2002).

The power analysis calculates the statistical significance of the probability that will correctly reject a false null hypothesis, such analysis estimates the sample size to achieve this (Hair, Hult, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2016). Using the formula developed by Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner,

and Lang (2009), G\*Power 3.1.9.2, the estimated sample size for this research is 82 participants. The alpha error probability considered is 5%, double tailed, and with a medium effect size of 0.30. While the power analysis provides information about the minimum sample, this research will be targeted a sample size of 180 salespeople.

### **3.4 Data analysis method selection**

Structural equation modeling (SEM) works with several equations at the same time, providing great flexibility for linear modeling (Monecke & Leisch, 2012). Löhmler (1984); Wold (1966) introduce the partial least squares approach to SEM, making this methodology even more accurate and representative. One of the main benefits of using PLS-SEM is the flexibility on the data distribution, not requiring normally distributed information (Monecke & Leisch, 2012). Several researchers support PLS-SEM to be used in marketing, management, and organizational research (Diamantopoulos & Winklhofer, 2001; Jarvis, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2003; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Jarvis, 2005)

One of the main differences between PLS-SEM and other approaches is the fact that PLS-SEM focuses on variances (prediction-oriented approach of the methodology) versus training to explain covariances (Hair et al., 2016). This is particularly important when the cause and effect relationships between the constructs is not investigated in deep detail. Also, PLS-SEM allows the addition of latent variables within the reflective or formative models. Research has found that when trying to analyze success factors and areas of competitive advantage, PLS-SEM is a very useful tool (Hair et al., 2016).

Based on the above reason, this study will be using PLS-SEM methodology to analyze the data and test the research hypotheses.

### 3.5 Measurements

This research involves five constructs (delayed gratification, conscientiousness, neuroticism, performance, and intention to leave). To evaluate them, this research will utilize previously used questionnaires that have been empirically tested for each one of the constructs, all of which are supported by strong Cronbach alpha values. Additionally, classification questions (age and time in sales), and control questions (time orientation, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction) will be added to the questionnaire to further analyze their impact on the research constructs.

Delayed gratification will be measured using the 12-item Generalizability of Deferment of Gratification Questionnaire (GDGQ) developed by (Ray & Najman, 1986). The questionnaire uses a Likert scale, with ranges from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” One of the important advantages of GDCQ is its focus on personality traits rather than its measurement of delayed gratification in a specific situation (Bembenutty & Karabenick, 1998; Ward, Perry, Woltz, & Doolin, 1989). The instrument uses 6 reverse coded questions. The Cronbach alpha for this scale is 0.75.

Conscientiousness and Neuroticism will be measured using the Big Five Inventory (BFI) developed by John and Srivastava (1999). The BFI has 44 questions to measure the five personality dimensions using a Likert scale, and it uses direct questions, making it easy to understand. As this study is just measuring two of the five personality dimensions, the questionnaire has 17 questions, 9 for conscientiousness and 8 for neuroticism. The reliability instrument is 0.80.

Sales literature has not been able to achieve a consensus on the best way to measure performance--through asking the salespeople themselves or asking manager, peers, and

customers (Churchill Jr et al., 1985). Researchers (Behrman & Perreault, 1982; Harris & Schaubroeck, 1988) consider that self-evaluations are the appropriate way to measure salespeople performance. For this research the self-evaluation seven question questionnaire created by (Behrman & Perreault, 1982) will be used to measure performance. The scale uses a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from “not easy for me” to “very easy for me.” The Cronbach alpha for this scale is 0.91.

Intention to leave will be measured by the five-question survey developed by as an adaptation from the scales created Ganesan and Weitz (1996) and Mobley, Horner, and Hollingsworth (1978) which uses a Likert scale. The instrument has a Cronbach alpha of 0.875.

Control questions will be used to see how variables such as time in sales, age and time orientation affect delayed gratification (Greene & Crowder, 1986; Nurmi, 1989). The analysis also controls how organizational commitment (Meyer & Allen, 2004) and job satisfaction (Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993), will be used to investigate their impact on job performance and intentions to leave. The short form of Stanford Time Perspective Inventory will be used to measure future orientation (D’Alessio, Guarino, De Pascalis, & Zimbardo, 2003).

Table 4 shows a summary of the construct and control variable measurements that will be used in this research. APPENDIX A shows the questionnaires for each one of the study constructs.



Table 4

*Summary of construct measurements*

Construct	Measurement	No. Questions	Scale
Delayed Gratification	Generalizability of Deferment of Gratification Questionnaire (GDGQ) Ray and Najman (1986).	12	5-item Likert
Conscientiousness	Big Five Inventory (BFI) John and Srivastava (1999)	9	5-item Likert
Neuroticism	Big Five Inventory (BFI) John and Srivastava (1999)	8	5-item Likert
Performance	Self-evaluation of performance Behrman and Perreault (1982)	5	5-item Likert
Intentions to leave	Intention to leave Ganesan and Weitz (1996)	5	5-item Likert
Organizational Commitment	Organizational commitment Rutherford, Boles, Hamwi, Madupalli, & Rutherford (2009)	3	5-item Likert
Job Satisfaction	Satisfaction with overall job Rutherford, Boles, Hamwi, Madupalli, & Rutherford (2009)	4	5-item Likert
Time Orientation	Stanford Time Perspective (short version, future oriented) Inventory D'Alessio, Guarino, De Pascalis, & Zimbardo (2003)	9	5-item Likert

### **3.6 Limitations**

Common method variance (CMV) can explain some of the relationships between constructs, affecting behavior research (Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko, & Roberts, 2009). One of the most common forms of CMV is Common Methods Bias (CMB) (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Exogenous and endogenous constructs that are collected from the same questionnaire have been found to create CMV issues (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986). The best course of action to prevent this type of CMV is not to obtain the exogenous and endogenous from the same subject (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012). As this is not possible for this research, the remedy proposed by Podsakoff et al. (2012), to present the questions in a random order, will be used. Furthermore, when designing the questionnaire, the scale points and anchor labels of scales will be changed between constructs to be able to reduce CMB (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

One of the main limitations of self-applied questionnaires is that the answers will be subject to social desirability bias (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002). One of the ways this bias manifests is in the form of acquiescence, when a respondent has the tendency to provide affirmative answers independently of the questions (Messick, 1967). This bias is especially apparent for the performance construct, as salespeople may self-evaluate their performance affirmatively. Respondent knowledge is another form of bias, especially if the respondent is unaware of his or her own biases and tendencies (Van de Mortel, 2008).

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This chapter discusses the analytical framework and measurements used to assess the model validity and reliability, as well as the strength of the relationships between the studied constructs. The software tools used to analyze this framework were Qualtrics to conduct the survey, Microsoft Excel to do the initial data analysis and clean up, and SmartPLS 3 (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005) to create and run the PLS-SEM model. This chapter consists of four main sections. First, the data properties will be discussed. Second, the measurement model will be analyzed to assess its consistency and reliability. Third, the structural model will be examined. The final section will focus on testing and analyzing the four model hypotheses.

#### 4.1 Data Properties

This section describes the collection method, data analysis, sample characteristics, and sample validation.

**4.1.1 Sample composition.** Two different B2B sales groups were used to comprise the study sample, a telecom group and an internet panel group. The telecom group, constituted of salespeople who work in the telecom industry, was used based on the researcher's access to this group. The internet panel group was used to increment the sample size, which increased generalizability by having additional industries represented, thus creating a larger and more diverse sample (Suri, 2011). Qualtrics Research provided the internet panel group responses, a company selected based on their access to the targeted sample group, as well as their quality

control methodology and rigor in screening participants to assure validity and confidentiality. In recent years, online sample research has made strides in the research community. Recent examples of research involving online samples include online communications and buying behavior (Groeger & Buttle, 2014; Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman, & Kannan, 2016; Toder-Alon, Brunel, & Fournier, 2014), brand loyalty (Laroche, Habibi, & Richard, 2013), social media sentiment analysis (Schweidel & Moe, 2014), youth exposure to alcohol marketing (Jernigan & Rushman, 2014), microblog marketing (Jin, Tang, & Zhou, 2017), and social media advertising and marketing (Lawlor et al., 2016; Schivinski, Christodoulides, & Dabrowski, 2016; Thies, Wessel, & Benlian, 2014).

Targeted email was used to solicit survey respondents for their participation. The participation eligibility criteria included having a direct sales role in a B2B organization with at least two years of sales experience. This minimum level of sales experience was important to properly measure sales performance within the context of this study, as participants needed to have enough sales cycles to measure performance, especially in B2B where sales cycles could be anywhere between three to twelve months. Based on this criterion, the researcher chose the minimum two-year experience mark.

For the telecom group, an invitational email was sent to 157 salespeople who were part of the investigator's professional network. The email explained the reasons behind the study and included a link to the survey. Throughout the process of collecting survey data, a biweekly reminder was sent to increase response rate. Also, respondents had the opportunity to use their email address to enter a raffle for one of three gift certificates. The collected email addresses were kept in a different database to preserve anonymity. Regarding the internet panel group, 146 respondents were requested. To validate the respondents from this group, as well as the quality

and completeness of the answers, a sample of 20 questionnaires was used. The researcher validated the sample result to be able to have the rest of the answers collected. Compiling the panel responses took 14 days.

**4.1.2 Data analysis.** The survey design was focused on providing clear and complete instructions to create a better user experience that would increase respondents' completion rate (Huang, Liu, & Bowling, 2015). Still, every respondent had different motivations to thoroughly answer all the questions (DeSimone, Harms, & DeSimone, 2015). Therefore, before running PLS-SEM, the data needed to be analyzed to assure consistency and completeness (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), a practice intended to reduce Type I rates (Huang et al., 2015). A total of 304 responses were collected. After reviewing them for consistency and completeness, the researcher rejected 62 responses since the responders did not answer all questions. The remaining 242 answers were visually and statistically analyzed for validation. For each variable, Boxplots were used for visual analysis, and normality test (kurtosis and skewness) for statistical analysis to identify outliers (Aguinis, Gottfredson, & Joo, 2013). As a result, 242 answers were considered valid for the study sample.

Some of the scales used in this study have variables with reversed answers, before migrating the captured data to PLS-SEM, the values for such variables were adjusted accordingly. The total number of affected variables was thirteen: six for delayed gratification; four for conscientiousness; and three for neuroticism.

PLS-SEM does not require the variables in the study to follow a normal distribution because the PLS algorithm transforms any non-normal distribution by using the central limit theorem (Beebe, 1998; Cassel, Hackl, & Westlund, 1999). Regardless, it is important to understand if there is data outside the normal distribution as it could create inflated errors on the

bootstrap analysis, which could produce type II errors, false negatives (Henseler, Ringle, & Sinkovics, 2009). To assess normality, the two main normality indicators, skewness and kurtosis, were analyzed. Skewness evaluations identify if the information for a variable is symmetrically distributed (Oja, 1981), while kurtosis evaluations provide information about the shape of the peak for the variables (Oja, 1981). Hair et al. (2016) propose the targeted values for skewness as  $\pm 1$ , while Ho and Yu (2015) consider a targeted kurtosis value of  $\pm 3.000$ . One of the study variables showed a non-normal skewness value of 1.256, and another variable showed a kurtosis value of 3.67, which was above the targeted value. The total number of variables in the study was 44. Therefore, since just two variables exceeded the recommended skewness or kurtosis values, the model's constructs did not present any non-normality issues and all variables could be used in the PLS-SEM model (Hair et al., 2016).

**4.1.3. Sample characteristics.** The demographics of the sample were as follows: of the total sample of 242 respondents, 142 (59%) were male and 100 (41%) were female. The mean age of the respondents was 44 years, the largest groups being 51-60 years old (28%) and 31-40 years old (26%). The mean for sales experience was 17 years. The sample consisted of 33 industries, with the largest being telecom at 38%, followed by business services at 10%. The race distribution was as follows: White with 82%, Asian with 8%, and African American with 6%. Regarding ethnicity, 90% were not Hispanic. Table 5 shows more details about the sample demographics.

Table 5

*Sample characteristics (n=242)*

Gender	Count	%	Age Range	Count	%	Years of Sales Experience	Count	%
Male	142	59%	30 or less	40	17%	2-5	55	23%
Female	100	41%	31-40	64	26%	6-10	50	21%
			41-50	53	22%	11-20	57	24%
			51-60	67	28%	21-30	50	21%
			61 or over	18	7%	31 or over	30	11%

Ethnicity	Count	%	Race	Count	%	Industry	Count	%
Hispanic or Latino	24	10%	American Indian	8	3%	Telecom	91	38%
Not Hispanic	218	90%	Asian	19	8%	Business Services	24	10%
			African American	14	6%	Electronics	16	7%
			Native Hawaiian	3	1%	Computer and SW	14	6%
			White	198	82%	Manufacturing	13	5%
						Others	84	34%

**4.1.4. Sample validation.** To determine if the telecom and panel samples could be considered as one sample, a *t* statistic test was performed (Ibragimov & Müller, 2010). This test provides a statistical argument to determine whether the samples are significantly different from

one another. Additionally, as a result of the  $t$  statistic test, Type II errors are reduced as they are inversely related to the sample size (Wan, Wu, Tseng, & Wang, 2009).

To find the  $t$  statistic value, first the null and alternative hypotheses were defined. The  $t$  statistic reference values (tails) were calculated using the degrees of freedom and the targeted  $\alpha$  of .05 as recommended by Fisher (1925); such reference values were used to confirm or reject the null hypothesis. Then, for both the panel and the telecom samples, the  $t$  statistic for each of the five-model constructs (conscientiousness, neuroticism, delayed gratification, sales performance, and intentions to leave) was calculated.

The null hypothesis assumes that both samples, the panel and the telecom, come from the same population and therefore can be considered as one sample; the alternative hypothesis considers that the samples are different and should not be combined. The means of each construct/sample define the hypotheses as follows:

$$H_0: \mu_{\text{panel}} = \mu_{\text{telecom}}$$

$$H_1: \mu_{\text{panel}} \neq \mu_{\text{telecom}}$$

The panel sample consisted of 146 respondents and the telecom sample of 96. To calculate the number of degrees of freedom ( $df$ ), the following formula was used:

$$df = (\text{size of panel sample } (n_1) - 1) + (\text{size of the telecom sample } (n) - 1)$$

$$df = (146 - 1) + (96 - 1)$$

$$df = 240$$

Applying 240 degrees of freedom provided the upper and lower limits of -1.96 and +1.96 for the left and right tails, the reference values that were compared with each of the  $t$  statistics values. If any of the  $t$  values from the sample comparisons fell between these two limits, the null hypothesis could not be rejected. Equation 1 shows the  $t$  statistic formula.



$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2 - \Delta}{\sqrt{\frac{s_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{n_2}}}$$

Where  $\bar{x}_1$  and  $\bar{x}_2$  are the means of the telecom and panel samples,  $\Delta$  accounts for the difference between the population means, which is assumed to be zero based on the null hypothesis;  $s_1^2$  and  $s_2^2$  represent the standard deviation of the panel and telecom samples respectively; finally,  $n_1$  and  $n_2$  are the sample size of each of the groups.

Calculating the means and standard deviations for the five constructs from both samples, and then applying the  $t$  statistic formula, resulted in the conclusion that the  $t$  statistic values from the sample comparisons failed to reject the null hypothesis. This result implies that both samples can be considered statistically as one. Table 5 shows the specific values for each of the constructs for the panel and telecom samples.

Table 6

*Sample comparison*

Statistic values	Conscientiousness		Neuroticism		Delayed Gratification		Sales Performance		Intentions to Leave	
	panel	telecom	panel	telecom	panel	telecom	panel	telecom	panel	telecom
Mean	4.209	4.236	2.402	2.185	3.543	3.614	3.942	3.982	2.636	2.677
Standard Deviation	.932	.835	1.113	.994	1.084	1.056	.855	.772	1.265	1.144
<i>t</i> value from sample comparison	-.233		1.588		-.506		-.377		-.264	
Reference Value	+ - 1.96		+ - 1.96		+ - 1.96		+ - 1.96		+ - 1.96	
Null hypothesis conclusion	Fail to reject		Fail to reject		Fail to reject		Fail to reject		Fail to reject	

## **4.2 Measurement Model Evaluation**

Once the PLS-SEM model has been established, Hair, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2011) recommend starting the analysis with the measurement model. This means focusing on the quality of the constructs and the variables that measured them. Evaluating the measurement model establishes the validity and relationships between the variables and constructs, which provides the relevant information to subsequently confirm or reject the four study hypotheses. In this study, the main measurement calculations performed to establish internal consistency and reliability were indicator reliability; convergent reliability; and discriminant validity.

The type of relationship, reflective or formative, between the constructs and the variables that measure them becomes a key consideration when building the measurement model (Finn & Wang, 2014). Considering a variable reflective or formative directly affects the way that the construct validity is measured for each construct (Cadogan & Lee, 2013). All the variables (indicators) in the model were considered reflective. As recommended by Hair et al. (2016), the model was analyzed using the SmartPLS 3 default values, with the exception of the number of bootstrap interactions, which was changed from 300 to 5,000.

**4.2.1 Internal consistency.** As each of the study constructs was formed from several indicators, it is important to evaluate internal consistency. This calculation confirms whether each group of indicators is correlated to measure the same construct (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978). Higher levels of consistency suggest that the composite scores of the indicators have a strong relationship with the construct (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011).

Two different measurements were used for internal consistency: Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Cronbach's alpha evaluates the reliability of the items in terms of the intercorrelations with the scale items (Hair et al., 2016). The target value for the alpha is larger than .70 but no greater than .95 (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1978). Hair et al. (2016) recommend measuring internal consistency with composite reliability, which considers different outer loading for the construct indicators. A value larger than .70 is the target for composite reliability (Gefen, Straub, & Boudreau, 2000). All the model constructs showed a value above .70 for both composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha. Table 7 depicts the construct consistency values.

**4.2.2 Convergent validity.** Convergent validity measures if there is a positive correlation between the different ways that each construct can be calculated. This establishes the strength of the different measurements while also providing legitimacy to the way the construct can be measured (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 7 shows three different alternatives to measure convergent validity: 1) at the indicator level; 2) at the indicator statistical significance level; 3) at the construct level by using the average variance extracted (AVE).

The indicator level, also called outer loading, provides an important reference of how much the variables that measure a construct have in common (Hair et al., 2016). Reliability is an important concept as it measures the degree of replicability of the measurement instrument when used on different occasions (Carlson, 2010). While several criteria have been established for measuring the indicators, this study utilized targeting loading values equal to or greater than .50 as recommended by Hulland (1999). Generally, variables with loadings below .50 were targeted to be removed. Adjusting the variable loading is an interactive process, as the removal of one

indicator impacts not just the specific variable and construct loadings, but the complete model, particularly the composite reliability and content validity of the construct. The removal of a variable should produce a positive impact on the model; otherwise, the indicator needs to remain part of the construct (Hair et al., 2016).

Eight indicators were removed from the model to improve reliability and validity. The indicator removal was done based on small loading values, the improvement that such removal provides to the model, and Hair et al. (2016) recommendations that in PLS the minimum number of indicators per construct could be as low as one. Indicators that were removed were two from conscientiousness (CS1, CS7), leaving seven indicators for this construct; four from delayed gratification (DG2, DG6, DG8, DG11), leaving eight indicators for this construct; one from neuroticism (NS3), leaving seven indicators to define this construct; and one from sales performance (SP5), leaving seven indicators for this construct. Seven of the remaining 31 indicators have a value below .50' based on Hair et al. (2016) recommendation to not remove indicators with small loadings if this negatively affects consistency and validity, these seven indicators were kept in the model.

The  $p$  values for the correlation between the indicators and the latent variables (constructs) were calculated (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Henseler, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2015). All the correlations between the indicators and constructs in this model showed a  $p$  value smaller than .001. At the construct level, convergent validity is measured by calculating AVE (Mallin & Munoz, 2013). The importance of convergent validity is that it measures the variance explained in the factor analysis. The target AVE value is larger than .50, as this value means that 50% of the

construct variance is explained by its indicators (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). The AVE values for the constructs were .267 for conscientiousness, .400 for neuroticism, .236 for delayed gratification, .319 for sales performance, and .526 for intentions to leave. However, AVE is a very conservative estimate. For this reason, when composite reliability values for the constructs are above .70, the model is considered appropriate even when the AVE values are below the targeted value of .50 (Gaskin, 2017). Table 7 depicts the values for the indicators' loading and reliability, as well as the construct values for AVE, composite reliability, and Cronbach's alpha.

**4.2.3 Discriminant validity.** Discriminant validity establishes if the construct measurement is empirically unique (Hair, Sarstedt, Ringle, & Gudergan, 2017), meaning that the indicators of one construct are not measuring a different construct as well (Chin & Dibbern, 2010; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Without establishing the unique influence of the indicator in just one construct, it is not possible to conclude that the model structural paths are relevant (Farrell, 2010).

Two methods have been used to calculate discriminant validity: the Fornell-Larcker criterion (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), and the cross-loading analysis. Both methods provide information to target indicators that could be removed based on their correlations (Hair et al., 2016). Fornell and Larcker criterion was the most common method used in PLS to determinate discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015); it uses the AVE of a latent variable and compares it with all the other variables (Chin, 1998; Chin & Dibbern, 2010; Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The test uses the square root of AVE to compare with all the other model constructs; if the square root is higher than the other constructs, then the model has discriminant validity. The cross-loading

Table 7

*Results Summary for Reflective Measurements*

Latent Variable	Indicators <sup>b</sup>	Convergent Validity				Internal Consistency Reliability	
		Loadings	Indicator Reliability	<i>t</i> Statistic	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Conscientiousness (CS)	CS2	.482	.471	7.009	.267	.718	.720
	CS3	.523	.526	9.266			
	CS4	.457	.472	6.225			
	CS5	.560	.551	8.089			
	CS6	.545	.541	6.092			
	CS8	.478	.491	7.563			
	CS9	.564	.560	8.424			
Delayed Gratification (DG)	DG1	.431	.451	5.542	.236	.701	.717
	DG3	.343	.583	8.912			
	DG4	.321	.512	7.194			
	DG5	.671	.382	4.865			
	DG7	.443	.310	3.828			
	DG9	.472	.644	11.662			
	DG10	.589	.448	5.748			
Intentions to leave (IL)	IL1	.857	.855	9.103	.526	.812	.804
	IL2	.628	.632	4.434			
	IL3	.569	.588	4.464			
	IL4	.808	.791	7.435			
Neuroticism (NS)	NS1	.612	.612	8.236	.400	.822	.825
	NS2	.578	.578	7.462			
	NS4	.568	.567	7.936			
	NS5	.637	.640	7.935			
	NS6	.700	.700	10.689			
	NS7	.599	.600	9.594			
	NS8	.714	.714	13.763			
Sales Performance (SP)	SP1	.706	.707	10.769	.319	.735	.738
	SP2	.562	.562	6.682			
	SP3	.490	.489	5.064			
	SP4	.507	.507	6.043			
	SP6	.528	.527	5.843			
	SP7	.569	.569	7.370			

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Eight indicators (CS1, CS7, DG2, DG6, DG8, DG11, NS3, & SP5) were removed to improve reliability and validity

<sup>b</sup> *p* value for each indicator was < .001.

criterion analyzes the outer loading values to define if one indicator seems to be influencing more than one construct (Chin, 1998).

Henseler et al. (2015), and Rönkkö and Evermann (2013) suggest that the Fornell-Larcker criterion could lead to the wrong conclusions about discriminant validity if certain circumstances are present. For example, research has found that variance-based SEM methods could underestimate the values of the indicator loadings (Hui & Wold, 1982; Lohmöller, 1989). PLS and Generalized Structured Component Analysis methods do not use the actual constructs to calculate the loading values. Instead, they use composites of the indicator variables; because of these calculations, a higher degree of correlation between indicators and constructs can be reported (Henseler et al., 2015). Such correlations will be even higher if the constructs have a small number of indicators (Aguirre-Urreta & Marakas, 2013). Additionally, the indicator's error variance is part of the composite calculations (Bollen & Lennox, 1991), which increases the possibility of higher degrees of correlation (Rigdon, 2014), resulting in inflated loading estimation. Scholars (Marcoulides, Chin, & Saunders, 2012; Reinartz, Haenlein, & Henseler, 2009) have also concluded that variance-based SEM in general underestimates structural model relationships. The effect created by inflated AVE values and under-considered structural model relationships has an effect in the discriminant validity that is yet to be fully researched. Finally, the Fornell-Larcker criterion is not based on interference statistics; hence, it does not provide a way to statistically test discriminant validity.

The cross-loading criterion has not been able to show its value when used in variance-based models (Henseler et al., 2015). Similar to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the cross-loading



method uses composites instead of the latent variables, creating an overestimation for the indicator loading. Furthermore, cross-loading criterion has failed to properly detect discriminant validity issues, particularly in scenarios where the sample size is not big and with loading partners that are not heterogeneous (Henseler et al., 2015).

Based on the above, a third method has been suggested, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) correlations ratio statistic (Henseler et al., 2015; Voorhees, Brady, Calantone, & Ramirez, 2016). HTMT defines the ratio of the between-trait to the within-trait correlations. It calculates the mean of all the correlations of the indicators that measure more than one construct (Hair et al., 2016). In a well-fitting model, the correlations between constructs should be smaller than the one between the constructs' indicators, which means that the HTMT ratio should be below 1.0. Kline (2011) recommends that such ratio should be lower than .85 to establish discriminant validity for the model. In their research, Henseler et al. (2015) empirically compared the calculation of discriminant validity with the three methods (Fornell-Larcker, cross-loadings, and HTMT), showing that HTMT is the method that provides the most accurate results.

As recommended by Henseler et al. (2015), and Hair et al. (2016), HTMT is being issued as the method to measure discriminant validity in this study. All the constructs showed values below the .85 target and had significance at 95% range; therefore, they met the discriminant validity criterion. Table 8 shows HTMT with its *t* statistic correspondent values.

Table 8

*Discriminant Validity*

Construct	CS	DG	IL	NS	SP
Conscientiousness (CS)					
Delayed Gratification (DG)	.774 [.629 - .890]				
Intentions to leave (IL)	.382 [.261 - .486]	.370 [.234 - .479]			
Neuroticism (NS)	.729 [.602 - .832]	.750 [.636 - .841]	.354 [.224 - .485]		
Sales Performance (SP)	.688 [.554, .790]	.526 [.400, .615]	.304 [.187, .420]	.464 [.311, .601]	
Mean	.717	.698	.806	.82	.073
Standard Deviation	.029	.038	.027	.023	.031
<i>t</i> Statistic	25.020	18.665	30.487	35.915	23.355

Note: The values in the brackets represent the lower and the upper bounds of the 95% confidence interval;  $p < .05$

**4.3 Structural Model Evaluation**

Once the consistency and reliability of the measurement model have been established, the next step is to analyze the structural model. The parameters that define the structural model are the common method variance (CMV), the model relationships relevance (path coefficients,  $\beta$ ), the explained variance ( $R^2$ ), the effect size ( $f^2$ ), the predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ), the effect size ( $q^2$ ), and the goodness-of-fit (Hair et al., 2016).

#### **4.3.1 Common method variance (CMV).** CMV is the variance that occurs

because of the way that the indicators are measured, instead of how the constructs are formed; it is the main source of measurement errors in behavioral research (Jarvis et al., 2003). In an extreme case, such errors could result in incorrect research assumptions (Fiske, 1949).

There are three commonly used techniques in surveys to reduce CMV: the use of Likert-type scales; the randomization of the order in which indicators appear in the survey; and the utilization of reverse coded questions (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Additionally, the use of anonymity for the survey respondents helps to reduce social desirability, which is an important component of CMV (Edwards, 1957). Each of these methods was used in the data gathering for this research.

Testing for collinearity, both vertical and lateral, assesses if CMV is a threat to the validity of the study results (Kock & Gaskins, 2014). In order to conclude that there are no collinearity issues for any of the model indicators, they need to have a value smaller than 5.0 (Kock, 2015). The variance inflation factor (VIF) was calculated for each of the latent variables by using linear regression between the indicators, and then obtaining the  $R^2$  from that regression. All the model constructs had a VIF value below the 5.0 targeted values; therefore, CMV was considered not significant for this project. Table 9 shows the indicator collinearity values.

Table 9

*Collinearity Values*

Conscientiousness		Neuroticism		Delayed Gratification	
Indicator	VIF	Indicator	VIF	Indicator	VIF
CS2	1.295	NS1	1.372	DG1	1.358
CS3	1.213	NS2	1.746	DG3	1.224
CS4	1.364	NS4	1.692	DG4	1.304
CS5	1.410	NS5	1.497	DG5	1.397
CS6	1.140	NS6	1.431	DG7	1.385
CS8	1.300	NS7	1.556	DG9	1.560
CS9	1.384	NS8	1.667	DG10	1.164
				DG12	1.135

Sales Performance		Intentions to Leave	
Indicator	VIF	Indicator	VIF
SP1	1.369	IL1	2.589
SP2	1.335	IL2	1.347
SP3	1.367	IL3	1.453
SP4	1.329	IL4	2.449
SP6	1.305		
SP7	1.213		

**4.3.2 Model relationships relevance ( $\beta$ ).** To establish the relevance of the relationships between the model constructs, the  $\beta$  for each of the connections was calculated. These calculations used bootstrapping calculations to identify the  $t$ -statistic values for each of the constructs to measure the significance of the relationships between them. All the model paths, conscientiousness to delayed gratification ( $\beta = .483$ ), neuroticism to delayed gratification ( $\beta = -.419$ ), delayed gratification to sales performance ( $\beta = .564$ ), and delayed gratification to intentions to leave ( $\beta = -.315$ ) had  $p$  values smaller than .001.

**4.3.3 Overall model predictive power ( $R^2$ ).** Once the path relevance has been measured, the model's predictive accuracy ( $R^2$ ) is calculated by dividing the variance explained in the endogenous constructs by the exogenous constructs. The values of  $R^2$  fluctuate between 0 and 1, where a value of 0 means there is not variance between the two constructs and a value of 1 defines a perfect construct variance, which means that both constructs change at the same pace. For exploratory purposes, there are three categories for the  $R^2$  values: a value below .25 is considered a weak effect, a value between .25 and .75 is a moderate effect, while a value above .75 is considered a substantial value (Hair et al., 2011). Delayed gratification showed a moderate  $R^2$  value of .705, which is significant ( $p = .000$ ); sales performance also had a moderate effect because its  $R^2$  value was .319, which is significant ( $p = .000$ ); intentions to leave had an  $R^2$  value of .100, which is weak, and had a non-significant effect. Table 10 indicates the values for  $R^2$ ,  $R^2_{\text{Adjusted}}$ ,  $t$ -statistics and the  $p$  values, and confident intervals.

**4.3.4 Effect size ( $f^2$ ).** Effect size ( $f^2$ ) measures the change of  $R^2$  in an endogenous construct after an exogenous construct is removed from the calculations (Hair et al., 2016). Like  $R^2$ ,  $f^2$  has three thresholds with which to be compared: a value smaller than .02 is considered a weak effect; when  $f^2$  is larger than .02 but smaller than .35, the effect on the relationship is evaluated as moderate; finally, a value larger than .35 results in a strong effect. The effect between conscientiousness and delayed gratification (.364) was strong and significant ( $p = .012$ ),

Table 10

*Predictive Power of the Model*

Endogenous Construct	$R^2$	$R^2_{Adjusted}$	$t$ Statistics	$p$ Values	95% Confidence Intervals
Delayed Gratification (DG)	.705	.703	9.510	.000	[.537, .827]
Sales Performance (SP)	.319	.317	3.584	.000	[.145, .479]
Intentions to leave (IL)	.100	.112	1.679	.093	[.114, .221]

while the effect between neuroticism to delayed gratification with a value of .275 was considered moderate and significant ( $p = .045$ ). The effect between delayed gratification and sales performance (.466) was strong and significant ( $p = .027$ ). Finally, the effect that delayed gratification had over intentions to leave (.110) was moderate and significant ( $p = .039$ ). See Table 11 for further details of the  $f^2$  values and their significance.

**4.3.5 Predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ).** Once the predictive power ( $R^2$ ) and the effect size ( $f^2$ ) of the model have been calculated, then finding and interpreting the cross-validated redundancy, for example external validity, is an important step. SmartPLS 3 calculates  $Q^2$  by using non-parametric blindfolding process, which uses an omission value of seven for the path weighting numbers (Hair et al., 2016).  $Q^2$  is calculated in base to the Stone-Geisser's values (Geisser, 1975; Stone, 1974). Values that are above zero for the endogenous constructs are considered relevant for the model. The three endogenous (dependent) constructs for the model, delayed gratification,

sales performance, and intentions to leave, showed values above zero. The values were .132 for delayed gratification, .068 for sales performance, and .036 for intentions to leave.

Table 11

*Effect size ( $f^2$ )*

Predictor Relationships	$f^2$	$t$ Statistics	$p$ Values	95% Confidence Intervals
Conscientiousness → Delayed gratification	.364	3.528	.012	[.054, 1.792]
Neuroticism → Delayed gratification	.275	1.990	.045	[.016, 1.001]
Delayed gratification → Sales Performance	.466	3.390	.027	[.201, 1.047]
Delayed gratification → Intentions to leave	.110	2.194	.039	[.017, .278]

**4.3.6 Effect size ( $q^2$ ).** The effect size  $q^2$  allows assessing each exogenous (independent) construct predictive relevance for a specific endogenous construct. This measurement evaluates the strength of the predictive relevance parameter ( $Q^2$ ). The size of the effect is evaluated as follows: when  $q^2$  is smaller than .02, the effect is negligible. For values between .02 and .14, the effect is considered weak; for  $q^2$  values between .15 and .35, the effect is moderate; for  $q^2$  values larger than .35, the effect is strong (Chin, 1998; Henseler et al., 2009). The effect value for conscientiousness to delayed gratification was weak (.025), as well as the one from neuroticism to delayed gratification (.038); the  $q^2$  values are included in Table 12.

**4.3.7 Goodness-of-fit.** Goodness of fit (GoF) is an important measure for SEM models. How to properly measure it within SmartPLS 3 has been subject to debate (Hair et al., 2017; Lohmöller, 2013; Rigdon, 1998). Currently, SmartPLS 3 (Ringle et al., 2005) cannot estimate the matrix covariance division that exists between the empirical and the implied models. For this reason, SmartPLS 3 uses a predictive modeling approach to be able to maximize the amount of explained covariance of the endogenous constructs.

This study used the recommended way of calculating the GoF from SmartPLS 3, which is to use the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) to estimate GoF (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The closer the value of SRMR is to zero, the better. However, scholars have yet to agree on the threshold values; Hu and Bentler (1999) consider that a GoF smaller than .080 is appropriate. The SRMR value for this research model was .076, which is below the threshold of .080; therefore, the model had an appropriate value for goodness-of-fit.

## **4.4 Hypotheses Testing**

**4.4.1 Hypothesis 1.** A high level of conscientiousness of a salesperson is positively related to delayed gratification. The results of the study found that conscientiousness has a significant and positive effect ( $\beta = .483, p = .001$ ) in its relationship with delayed gratification. The effect size ( $f^2$ ) value of such relationship was strong, as its value was .364 and it was significant ( $p = .012$ ), while the strength of the predictive relevance parameter ( $q^2$ ) value was considered weak at .025. The amount of variance explained ( $R^2$ ) that conscientiousness had over delayed gratification was moderate, as it had a value of .705 and it was significant ( $p = .000$ ).



Based on the statistical values from the model, there was a positive and significant relationship between conscientiousness and delayed gratification; therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported.

**4.4.2 Hypothesis 2.** A high level of neuroticism of a salesperson is negatively related to delayed gratification. To be able to assess hypothesis 2, the relationship between neuroticism and delayed gratification was analyzed. First, the direct effect between the two constructs showed a negative  $\beta$  value of .419 value that is significant ( $p = .000$ ). Second, the effect size ( $f^2$ ) between the constructs showed a moderate value of .275 that was significant ( $p = .045$ ). The third step was to analyze the strength of the predictive relevance parameter ( $q^2$ ) value, which at .038 was considered weak. The final step was to measure the amount of variance explained ( $R^2$ ) that neuroticism had over delayed gratification, and its value was moderate (.705) and significant ( $p = .000$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 2 was supported, as the statistical values from the model confirmed a negative but significant relationship between neuroticism and delayed gratification.

**4.4.3 Hypothesis 3.** Delayed gratification is positively related to salesperson performance. Three parameters were analyzed to test this hypothesis: the direct effect ( $\beta$ ) and the effect size ( $f^2$ ) that delayed gratification has over sales performance, and the variance explained ( $R^2$ ) that delayed gratification has over sales performance. The  $\beta$  value between delayed gratification and sales performance was .501, and it was significant ( $p = .000$ ). The effect size ( $f^2$ ) value was strong at .466, and significant ( $p = .027$ ). Finally, the  $R^2$  value was moderate at .319, and significant ( $p = .000$ ). The statistical values of the model confirmed a positive and significant relationship between delayed gratification and sales performance; therefore, hypothesis 3 was supported.

**4.4.4 Hypothesis 4.** Delayed gratification is negatively related to salespeople's intentions to leave their company. As with hypothesis 3, three parameters were analyzed to test this hypothesis: the direct effect ( $\beta$ ) and the effect size ( $f^2$ ) between delayed gratification and intentions to leave, and the variance explained that delayed gratification had over intentions to leave ( $R^2$ ). The  $\beta$  value between these two constructs was a negative .268, and it was significant ( $p = .002$ ). The  $f^2$  value was weak at .110, and significant ( $p = .039$ ). Finally, the  $R^2$  value was also weak at .103, and non-significant. The statistical values of the model confirmed a negative and significant relationship between delayed gratification and intentions to leave; therefore, hypothesis 4 was supported.

Table 12 shows the relevant statistical values for the model to evaluate its validity, consistency, and each of the four hypotheses. For an easier visual evaluation, Figure 2 shows these values for the structural model.

Table 12

*Significance Testing Results of the Structural Path Coefficients*

Hypotheses	Structural Path	Path Coefficients $\beta$	$t$ Statistics	$p$ Values	95% Confidence Intervals	$f^2$ Effect Size	$q^2$ Effect Size	Hypothesis Result
H1	Conscientiousness → Delayed gratification	.483	3.208	.001	[.186, .764]	.364	.025	Supported
H2	Neuroticism → Delayed gratification	-.419	2.939	.000	[-.681, -.122]	.275	.038	Supported
H3	Delayed gratification → Sales performance	.501	7.181	.000	[.330, .615]	.466		Supported
H4	Delayed gratification → Intentions to leave	-.268	3.056	.002	[-.406, -.044]	.110		Supported

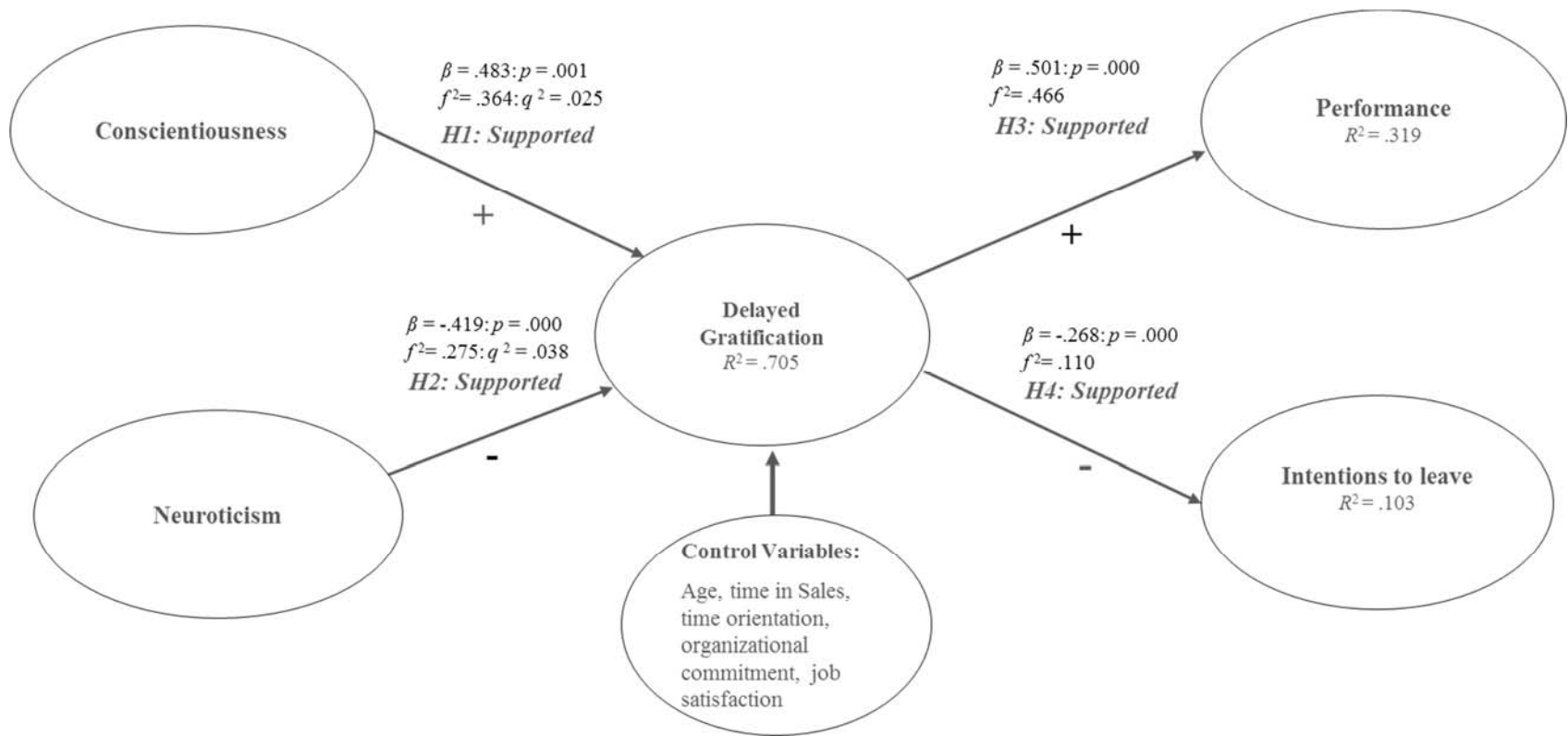


Figure 2. Structural model results

**4.4.5 Control variables.** The model has several control variables: age, time in sales, gender, time orientation, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction. Bootstrap testing was performed to see if there was any significance on the path between delayed gratification and the controlling variables. Organizational commitment was the only one showing a significant  $\beta$  value in its relationship with delayed gratification. Such  $\beta$  value of  $-.192$  established a negative but significant ( $p = .036$ ) relationship between these two constructs. Table 13 shows the results for the control variables.

Table 13

*Control Variables*

Structural path	$\beta$ value	$p$ value	$f^2$	$q^2$
Age -> delayed gratification	.056	.391	.011	.000
Gender -> delayed gratification	-.084	.259	.020	.000
Times in sales -> delayed gratification	.004	.947	.004	.000
Time orientation -> delayed gratification	.113	.572	.023	.000
Organizational commitment -> delayed gratification	-.192	.036	.108	
Job satisfaction -> delayed gratification	-.067	.489	.012	

**4.5 Summary of Results**

The results obtained by running the PLS, bootstrap, and blindfolding algorithms to calculate reliability, validity, path modeling, and the effect sizes between the model constructs

provided enough information to validate the model strength, as well as to support the four study hypotheses. From the validity and reliability perspective, the model passed all the measurement model evaluations, as the internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity tests showed values within the targeted limits. As for the structural model evaluation, goodness-of-fit and CMV also were within the recommended values to consider the model valid. Regarding the specific values for the construct relationships, the path coefficients ( $\beta$ ) values confirmed a statistically significant relationship between the five constructs that were part of the four research hypotheses. Regarding the variance that the endogenous variable had over the exogenous variable ( $R^2$ ), hypotheses 1,2, and 3 had a significant  $p$  value at the 95% level. Finally, as for the effect size ( $f^2$ ), all four hypotheses showed  $p$  values with significance at the 95% level. Based on these results, the four study hypotheses were supported.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION, MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION**

The first part of this chapter addresses the importance of the study results and the validation of the four hypotheses. The second section focuses on the relevance for academia of such findings. The third part investigates managerial implications from the study results. Finally, the last section of this chapter proposes areas of future investigation as well as the main limitations.

#### **5.1 Discussion of Results**

Organizations often try to delineate and understand what makes individuals perform to a high level (Verbeke et al., 2011) and how to increase employee retention (Buciuniene & Skudiene, 2009), while employees try to find ways to be more competitive in the marketplace and to make the best decisions about whether to stay or leave an organization (Lee et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2001). The results of this study support a significant relationship between delayed gratification, a self-discipline-based construct, sales performance, and intentions to leave. This impact is larger for sales performance than for intentions to leave. The results also provide support that two of the BIG 5 individual differences, conscientiousness and neuroticism, have a significant relationship with delayed gratification. As previously stated by Tobin and Graziano (2009), gender used as a control variable did not affect the construct relationships.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 focused on the antecedents of delayed gratification, specifically, how two of the BIG 5 personality traits (conscientiousness and neuroticism) were related to delayed gratification. In B2B, salespeople who exhibit conscientiousness traits, such as competence, being goal oriented, self-discipline, and being task oriented (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Judge & Ilies, 2002), have a better chance of success in their sales careers (Barrick et al., 1993; Furnham & Fudge, 2008; Yang et al., 2011). Also, B2B salespeople who show neurotic behaviors such as irritability, restlessness, anger, and aggressiveness decrease their possibility of being successful in achieving their sales objective (Baumeister et al., 1994; Metcalfe & Mischel, 1999).

A key finding uncovered in this study was the direct relationship that delayed gratification has with conscientiousness, and intentions to leave. Delayed gratification is a self-regulation mechanism that allows a person to adapt his or her behaviors to meet the demands of the environment (Doerr & Baumeister, 2010). Self-regulation is the person's ability to manage his or her own emotions (Bandura, 1977). Salespeople with strong self-discipline are better in managing their tasks and goals, hence will be able to self-regulate their behaviors and apply delayed gratification when it is important for their long-term achievements (Nuttin, 2014). Also, salespeople who properly manage negative feelings such as anger, aggressiveness, and anxiety decrease their ability to act by impulse. This emotional stability provides them the possibility to use delayed gratification to achieve their objectives (Sharma & Saxena, 2014).

Behaviors related to conscientiousness and neuroticism have already been associated with performance (Fang et al., 2004; Rapp et al., 2008). This research focused on how these traits affect the ability to use delayed gratification for salespeople. Ultimately, this study showed that



conscientiousness and neuroticism have a significant effect on whether individuals develop delayed gratification (Mischel & Ayduk, 2004; Mischel et al., 1989; Renn et al., 2011). As expected, conscientiousness has a positive relationship towards delayed gratification (Renn et al., 2011), and neuroticism is negatively related to delayed gratification (Jensen-Campbell & Graziano, 2005). The importance of this study is that it is one of the first to validate such relationships for salespeople. As a result, both individuals and organizations can better understand the value that delayed gratification brings to business relationships and business outcomes.

Hypothesis 3 proposes a positive relationship between delayed gratification and sales performance. Sales performance is paramount to organizations; hence, it has been the focus of much research to better understand what influences it (Anderson & Oliver, 1987; Churchill Jr et al., 1985; Verbeke et al., 2011). While several factors may affect sales performance, such as product, market conditions, organizational process, training, payment structures, salespeople skills, etc., in B2B sales, the main attention is in the salespeople and their skills (Blount, 2018). For this reason, understanding what makes salespeople successful and how to increase their chances to increase performance are key questions for organizations and individuals (Borman et al., 2001; Hoffman et al., 2007).

Several behaviors have already been positively associated with sales performance, including communication ability, achievement orientation, inward pessimism, relationship management, and organizational morale (Martin, 2006). One such behavior, self-regulation, has an important role in planning and executing defined goals (Chebat & Kollias, 2000; Renn et al., 2011). While scholars have established a relationship between self-regulation constructs and

performance (Bandura & Locke, 2003; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). to date, very limited literature has analyzed the impact that delayed gratification has over sales performance Self-regulation is one of the key attributes of successful salespeople (Chebat & Kollias, 2000; Hartline & Ferrell, 1996; Krishnan et al., 2002).

Sales performance research has also increased its focus on adaptive sales, as B2B complexity requires a high degree of flexibility from salespeople to adapt their style to the specifics of the sale to increase their chances to successfully complete it (Joseph & Newman, 2010). In their research, Chen and Jaramillo (2014) concluded that salespeople's emotion regulation increases the ability to practice adaptive selling. Delayed gratification is behavior that needs to be used when appropriate; hence, it should be considered one of the behaviors that salespeople should use as part of adaptive selling.

The validation of the positive relationship between delayed gratification and sales performance from this study positions delayed gratification as an additional construct that has a positive relationship with salespeople's performance in the B2B space. While no single construct will be the only one that contributes to sales performance, the positive results of this research highlight the importance of delayed gratification as an additional behavior that, when used properly, increases salespeople's performance.

Hypothesis 4 connects delayed gratification with intentions to leave. Based on the Unfolding Model of Turnover (Holtom et al., 2005; Lee & Mitchell, 1991), everyone will react differently to the impulse to leave their job. Scholars have identified the main reasons that influence intentions to leave: job satisfaction; organizational commitment; job search behavior;

and economic factors, such as salaries, bonus and benefits (Carsten & Spector, 1987; Locke, 1976; Mobley et al., 1979; Spector, 1997). Particularly for psychological factors such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, individuals' reaction to organizational issues has an important role in affecting these constructs.

Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) were the first scholars who empirically confirmed that intention to leave is a strong predictor of behavioral intentions. Several scholars subsequently confirmed their findings (Mobley et al., 1979; Mowday, 1981; Steel & Ovalle, 1984). From a psychological perspective, factors such as developmental, emotional, and motivational needs affect intentions to leave and confirm that employee retention is a complex human resource challenge (Kopelman et al., 1992). Each one of these factors consists of analysis, decision making, and an action plan to show the selected behavioral response (Lee & Mitchell, 1994; Locke, 1976). One of the main research conclusions about employee retention is that the attachment employees demonstrate to an organization varies from person to person (Barrick & Zimmerman, 2009; March & Simon, 1958)

Employees who practice delayed gratification are expected to have smaller propensity to overreact to business issues and, as a consequence, will be less likely to develop intentions to leave compared to individuals with difficulties controlling their reactions (Lee et al., 1996). Especially for salespeople where yearly turnover is as high as 39% (Hrehocik, 2007), and the cost associated with replacing salespeople is between three to four times their yearly salary (Hrehocik, 2007; Van Clieaf, 1991), it is important to find ways to reduce these numbers. In B2B, salespeople are tasked to develop long- lasting relationship with customers to increase their

chances to succeed due to the recurrent nature of the business and the long sales cycles.

Reducing salespeople turnover will help to maintain such customer relationships and will be directly correlated to customer satisfaction, which is also connected to sales performance (Morgan & Rego, 2006).

For these reasons, hypothesis 4 proposed that for salespeople, delayed gratification is negatively related to intentions to leave, and this study supported such a relationship. While there is a weak negative relationship between delayed gratification and intentions to leave, it is a significant one and can help position delayed gratification as one of the several constructs that could help to reduce intentions to leave. As mentioned before, such intentions to leave harm companies not just because of the actual turnover, but because of their impact on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance.

## **5.2 Implications for Theory**

The focus of this study was to investigate the importance of delayed gratification for salespeople in B2B. The specific gaps that this research is addressing include the individual differences that are related to delayed gratification for salespeople, as well as how these differences affect performance and intentions to leave in B2B. One implication for theory is to consider the importance of delayed gratification when studying salespeople behaviors that affect business outcomes, such as performance and intentions to leave.

Based on their importance for organizations, salespeople have been subject to a plethora of research to understand what traits and behaviors help salespeople be successful and, at the same time, how to retain and motivate such individuals (Aggarwal et al., 2004; Boles et al., 2012;

Darmon, 2008; Fournier et al., 2010; Pettijohn et al., 2008). However, there has been limited research in the influence that delayed gratification has on business, and more importantly, the implications for salespeople.

Knowing how to create stronger relationships with customers (external and internal) is important for salespeople. Furthermore, in B2B sales where sales cycles are long, understanding what helps establish such relationships is key to increase the opportunities for success. Self-regulation attributes are the most important aspect of creating and maintaining such relationships. Therefore, understanding which additional constructs support delayed gratification in business is important to better understand the relationships theory.

For salespeople, learning about how self-controlling behaviors, such as delayed gratification, can affect their performance and their intentions to leave or stay in an organization is important to increase their opportunities to perform at higher levels and to make better decisions. With the increased use of online selling, and the proliferation of artificial intelligence in more business areas, increasing salespeople's value and success becomes very important.

### **5.3 Implications for Practice**

For practitioners, this study provides important information on the role that delayed gratification has within the whole organization, and in particular, the sales area. While the full impact that delayed gratification has in the organization needs to be further studied, this research provides relevant information about which personality traits are related to delayed gratification. Also, it suggests under which circumstances delayed gratification increases sales performance, and how it supports individuals to “not rush” when considering leaving an organization. With this

information, organizations can start tracking how such traits are currently affecting their organization's outputs, and how to possibly screen for these behaviors in new hires. Depending on the specifics of their sales cycles, organizations can start monitoring the performance of salespeople who show high levels of delayed gratification and how the turnover of such individuals compares with the rest of the organization. Finally, organizations can also analyze if their company culture is conducive for developing delayed gratification or if the organizational dynamics create an immediate gratification method of working.

#### **5.4 Limitations and Future Research**

As with any empirical research, this study has certain limitations. These limitations need to be acknowledged when considering the findings of this study. These limitations may also create interesting opportunities for future research. While several industries are represented in this study, the sample has a large percentage of salespeople from the Telecom industry (38%). Also, the researcher decided to have a minimum two-year mark for sales experience for people participating in the study, and while this showed not to be statistically significant difference, this decision could have limited the experience diversity of the sample. Finally, sales performance was self-measured by the salespeople, this could have biased the evaluation.

Regarding future research, there are several opportunities within the direct context of this study as well as in similar areas that could provide additional information for the study constructs. For the specifics of this context, organizational commitment showed a significant impact as a control variable; hence, it could be introduced as a construct within the model, instead of as a control variable. Job satisfaction has been related to intentions to leave (Carsten & Spector, 1987;

Locke, 1976; Mobley et al., 1979; Spector, 1997), and thus it can be introduced to the model as a direct relationship to job satisfaction with delayed gratification as a moderator.

Delayed gratification should be considered one of the behaviors of adaptive selling, as it is one of the elements that allows salespeople to adapt to different sales situations. In this case, adaptive selling allows salespeople to have the patience to close the sale at the proper time. Self-controlling mechanisms are one of the four pillars of emotional intelligence (Blount, 2017). Therefore, understanding the relationship between delayed gratification and emotional intelligence should also be studied as it will provide additional information of how these two constructs affect salespeople's organizational outputs.

The relationship between delayed gratification, adaptive sales, and emotional intelligence is an area that needs to be researched for salespeople. B2B sales are complex and require high levels of skills to succeed. No single sales approach will work all the time, so adapting to the specifics of the sales situation is important. Successful salespeople need to have several sales styles (adaptive selling), and the emotional intelligence to know under which circumstance to use each one. For this reason, the relation between these sales behaviors needs to be better understood.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This study provides elements to consider delayed gratification as one of the behaviors that should be taken into account when analyzing important organizational constructs such as salespeople's performance, intentions to leave, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. All these organizational constructs are complex and cannot be explained by a simple construct;

therefore, finding additional constructs that bring additional information of how to better explain them is a step on the right direction. In today's business environment where immediate rewards seem to be the norm, organizations should consider the benefits that delayed gratification provides to business when it is used in the right business situations.



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**APPENDIX A**  
**QUESTIONNAIRES**

Main Constructs

Table 14

*Delayed Gratification Survey*

No.	Question	Range	
1	Are you good at saving your money rather than spending it straight away	strongly disagree	strongly agree
2	Do you enjoy something more because you have had to wait for it?	strongly disagree	strongly agree
3	Did you tend to save your pocket-money as a child	strongly disagree	strongly agree
4	When you are in a supermarket, do you tend to buy a lot of things you hadn't planned to buy? <b>(R)</b>	strongly disagree	strongly agree
5	Are you constantly broke? <b>(R)</b>	strongly disagree	strongly agree
6	Do you agree with the philosophy: "Eat, drink and be merry, tomorrow we may be all dead"? <b>(R)</b>	strongly disagree	strongly agree
7	Would you describe yourself as often being too impulsive for your own good? <b>(R)</b>	strongly disagree	strongly agree
8	Do you often find that it is worthwhile to wait and think things over before deciding?	strongly disagree	strongly agree
9	Do you like to spend your money as soon as you get it? <b>(R)</b>	strongly disagree	strongly agree
10	Is it hard for you to keep calm when someone gets you very angry? <b>(R)</b>	strongly disagree	strongly agree
11	Can you tolerate being kept waiting for things fairly easy most of the time?	strongly disagree	strongly agree
12	Are you good at planning things way in advance?	strongly disagree	strongly agree

**(R)** = Reverse item



Table 15

## Conscientiousness Survey

**I see myself as someone who.....**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Range</b>	
1	Does a thorough job	strongly disagree	strongly agree
2	Can be somewhat careless <b>(R)</b>	strongly disagree	strongly agree
3	Is a reliable worker	strongly disagree	strongly agree
4	Tends to be disorganized <b>(R)</b>	strongly disagree	strongly agree
5	Tends to be lazy <b>(R)</b>	strongly disagree	strongly agree
6	Perseveres until the task is finished	strongly disagree	strongly agree
7	Does thing efficiently	strongly disagree	strongly agree
8	Makes plans and follows through with them	strongly disagree	strongly agree
9	Is easily distracted <b>(R)</b>	strongly disagree	strongly agree

**(R)** = Reverse item

Table 16

## Neuroticism Survey

**I see myself as someone who.....**

<b>No.</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Range</b>	
1	Is depressed, blue	strongly disagree	strongly agree
2	Is relaxed, handles stress well <b>(R)</b>	strongly disagree	strongly agree
3	Can be tense	strongly disagree	strongly agree
4	Worries a lot	strongly disagree	strongly agree
5	Is emotionally stable, not easily upset <b>(R)</b>	strongly disagree	strongly agree
6	Can be moody	strongly disagree	strongly agree
7	Remains calm in tense situations <b>(R)</b>	strongly disagree	strongly agree
8	Get nervous easily	strongly disagree	strongly agree

**(R)** = Reverse item

Table 17

## Sales Performance Survey

No.	Question	Range	
1	Contributing to your company's acquiring a good market share	not easy for me	very easy for me
2	Selling high profit-margin products	not easy for me	very easy for me
3	Generating a high level of dollars sales	not easy for me	very easy for me
4	Quickly generating sales of new company products	not easy for me	very easy for me
5	Identifying major projects/accounts in your territory and selling to them	not easy for me	very easy for me
6	Exceeding sales targets	not easy for me	very easy for me
7	Assisting your sales supervisor meet his or her goals	not easy for me	very easy for me

Table 18

## Intentions to Leave Survey

No.	Question	Range	
1	I am thinking a lot about leaving my job	strongly disagree	strongly agree
2	I am actively searching for alternatives in the company I work for	strongly disagree	strongly agree
3	If I do not get promoted soon, I will look for a job elsewhere	strongly disagree	strongly agree
4	I intend to leave this organization within a short period of time	strongly disagree	strongly agree
5	I do not think I will spend my entire career with this organization	strongly disagree	strongly agree

Control Variables

Table 19

*Organizational Commitment Survey*

<b>In my job, I...</b>			
<b>No.</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Range</b>	
1	Find that my values and the organization's values are very similar.	strongly disagree	strongly agree
2	Feel this organization really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.	strongly disagree	strongly agree
3	Feel, for me, this is the best of all possible organization for which to work.	strongly disagree	strongly agree

Table 20

*Overall Job Satisfaction Survey*

<b>No.</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Range</b>	
1	My job gives me a sense of accomplishment	strongly disagree	strongly agree
2	My job exciting	strongly disagree	strongly agree
3	My job is satisfying	strongly disagree	strongly agree
4	I am really doing something worthwhile in my job	strongly disagree	strongly agree

Table 21

*Time Orientation Survey*

No.	Question	Range	
1	I believe that a person's day should be planned ahead each morning.	strongly disagree	strongly agree
2	It gives me pleasure to think about my past.	strongly disagree	strongly agree
3	When I want to achieve something, I set goals and consider specific means for reaching those goals	strongly disagree	strongly agree
4	Meeting tomorrow's deadlines and doing other necessary work comes before tonight's play.	strongly disagree	strongly agree
5	I believe that my future is beautiful and well planned.	strongly disagree	strongly agree
6	I complete projects on time by making steady progress.	strongly disagree	strongly agree
7	I make lists of things to do.	strongly disagree	strongly agree
8	I keep working at difficult, uninteresting tasks if they will help me get ahead.	strongly disagree	strongly agree
9	I am able to resist temptations when I know that there is work to be done.	strongly disagree	strongly agree