

## **Salesperson-Team Congruence: How Self-Efficacy and Collective Efficacy Shapes Sales Performance and Team Satisfaction**

### **Autoria**

Valter da Silva Faia - valterfaia@gmail.com

PCO/UEM - Universidade Estadual de Maringá

Prog de Pós-Grad em Admin - PPA/UEM - Universidade Estadual de Maringá

### **Resumo**

In a sales team, salespeople do assessments about their self-efficacy and collective efficacy that may be congruent or not. When they are congruent, there is a sense of individual and collective confidence and an alignment between salespeople and sales team that results in positive team attitudes. However, little is known about the effects of this congruence and what organizational aspects promote it. In this work, we propose that the congruence between salespeople's assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy positively influences sales performance and team satisfaction. In addition, we propose that management support promotes the congruence that plays a mediation role. We conducted a survey with 200 retail store salespeople to test our hypotheses. The results showed that (i) the sales performance and team satisfaction vary positively along the congruence line; and (ii) the congruence between salespeople's assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy mediates the relationships between the management support and outcome variables. Our results contribute to Social Cognitive Theory and Fit Theory by demonstrating that the salespeople's performance and team satisfaction depends on both the assessments that they make of their capabilities and team and that the supportive practices are important to promote the congruence of beliefs.

## Salesperson-Team Congruence: How Self-Efficacy and Collective Efficacy Shapes Sales Performance and Team Satisfaction

**Abstract:** In a sales team, salespeople do assessments about their self-efficacy and collective efficacy that may be congruent or not. When they are congruent, there is a sense of individual and collective confidence and an alignment between salespeople and sales team that results in positive team attitudes. However, little is known about the effects of this congruence and what organizational aspects promote it. In this work, we propose that the congruence between salespeople's assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy positively influences sales performance and team satisfaction. In addition, we propose that management support promotes the congruence that plays a mediation role. We conducted a survey with 200 retail store salespeople to test our hypotheses. The results showed that (i) the sales performance and team satisfaction vary positively along the congruence line; and (ii) the congruence between salespeople's assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy mediates the relationships between the management support and outcome variables. Our results contribute to Social Cognitive Theory and Fit Theory by demonstrating that the salespeople's performance and team satisfaction depends on both the assessments that they make of their capabilities and team and that the supportive practices are important to promote the congruence of beliefs.

**Keywords:** Self-efficacy; Collective efficacy; Congruence, Management support; Sales performance.

### 1 Introduction

In many sales organizations, salespeople work in teams with the purpose of gathering experts and encouraging interactions between them to generate better solutions to customers and improve individual and organizational performance (Cuevas, 2018). As sales teams imply in interdependencies in terms of work, objectives, and results (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006), the individual performance becomes a function of personal and team features (Rapp & Mathieu, 2019). The collaboration and sharing of resources among team members enable salespeople to achieve better results in sales activities than they would likely achieve alone (Hu & Liden, 2015; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). However, conflicts and disagreements have the opposite effect and can be barriers for salespeople to achieve good results.

One of the features that influence the salespeople's performance and that is related to the individual and the team is the beliefs that they have about the capabilities to usefully execute the sales activities (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Stajkovic, Lee, & Nyberg, 2009). A salesperson has a level of self-efficacy that represents how much he or she believes to be able to achieve good sales results (Bandura, 1982). At the same time, he or she assesses the level of collective efficacy that represents his or her belief in the ability of the team to achieve good sales results through collective work (Stajkovic et al., 2009). These beliefs may be congruent or not. For example, a salesperson can assess self-efficacy and collective efficacy to the same extent or assess both in a misaligned way (self-efficacy > collective efficacy or collective efficacy > self-efficacy).

Several studies have examined self-efficacy and collective efficacy independently, highlighting the main effect these constructs on performance measures (De Jong, De Ruyter, & Wetzels, 2006; Wu, Tsui, & Kinicki, 2010; Rapp, Bachrach, Rapp, & Mullins, 2014; Menguc, Auh, Yeniaras, & Katsikeas, 2017; Fu, Richards, Hughes, & Jones, 2010). Thus, how the congruence or incongruence between self-efficacy and collective efficacy affects salespeople's performance is unclear, representing a research gap for at least two reasons. First, as a team refers to a set of people who interact socially and who have work interdependencies, not only

the salespeople assessment of their capabilities matters to the effort and perseverance in the sales activities but also the assessment that they make of the team's abilities. Second, although the team's assessment is important for good sales results, how much the salespeople feel able of contributing and integrating the team by means of their own capabilities is also important to avoid distancing and a sense of insecurity and threat in the team (Fast, Burris, & Bartel, 2014).

For these reasons, the congruence between the salespeople's assessment of self-efficacy and collective efficacy constitutes the focus of this study. We defended that the congruence should improve teamwork and cooperation, reduce the uncertainties of the sales environment, and increase the level of effort, motivation and satisfaction in sales activities (Verquer, Beehr, & Wagner, 2003; Seggewiss, Boeggemann, Straatmann, Mueller, & Hatrup, 2019, Rapp & Mathieu, 2019). Thus, we proposed that the congruence between salespeople's assessment of self-efficacy and collective efficacy improves sales performance and team satisfaction. Considering that congruence is positive for the sales teams, we are also interested in promoting them. The support from sales manager is related to positive aspects of work because it clarifies the sales objectives, directs and prepares salespeople, and provides resource sharing (e.g., knowledge, information, and experiences) (De Jong, De Ruyter, & Wetzels, 2005). These helpful aspects of support are necessary conditions for raising the perceived capacity of salespeople in working individually and collectively (De Jong et al., 2005). Thus, we also proposed that management support promotes the congruence between self-efficacy and collective efficacy, mediating the indirect effect of management support on sales performance and team satisfaction.

In addressing these proposals, we contribute with two domains of market literature. First, we contribute with the literature based on Social Cognitive Theory by evidencing that, despite the determinants of self-efficacy and collective efficacy are similar (Bandura, 1977), the development of them is not isomorphic (Tasa, Taggar, & Seijts, 2007) and that they produce different effects on performance measure according to the combinations of congruence and incongruences. Second, we contribute with the Fit Theory (Kristoff, 1986), which is based how the alignment between individuals and their work environment produce different effects on measures of work performance (Verquer et al., 2003; Seggewiss et al., 2019). We advance by investigating the congruence between the salespeople's perceptions of themselves and their sales teams and testing it as a mediator between management support and performance measures.

## 2 Theoretical Background

*Self-efficacy.* Self-efficacy "is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes" (Bandura, 1977, p. 193). Individuals who think they are effective, are aware of the amount of effort that is sufficient to achieve good results and tend to be more persistent in the face of difficulties and adverse situations (Bandura, 1982). Therefore, self-efficacy is a regulation mechanism that determines the level of challenges and risks that a person is willing to face, as well as an important determinant of performance in the execution of activities (Park & John, 2014). Individuals with similar skills can achieve different levels of success, depending on differences in how much they believe in their capacities (Wood & Bandura, 1989; Bandura, 1977).

The assessment of self-efficacy is related to the ability to perform tasks that are associated with a specific activity domain and a specific temporal focus (Stajkovic et al., 2009). In this research, our interest is to investigate the self-efficacy in the sales activity's domain, especially in relation to expectations of the salesperson role that involve customer service, such as creating and maintaining relationships, reducing customer uncertainties, responding customer demands, collecting customer information, negotiating, hearing complaints, selling,

among others (Mullins, Ahearne, Lam, Hall, & Boichuk, 2014; Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014; Cron, 2017). Thus, our self-efficacy definition is “the ability to perform sales tasks such as making customer calls, listening to and understanding the customer’s needs, negotiating, and participating in personal interactions with the customer” (Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014, p. 64).

*Collective Efficacy.* Because the interdependence and demand for collective effort when individuals working in groups, the notion of self-efficacy has been expanded from the individual to the group level, raising the concept of collective efficacy (Bandura, 1982). Collective efficacy is an individual’s belief in team “capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments” (Stajkovic, 2009, p. 814). The individuals’ perceptions of collective efficacy influence the team decision-making and the level of effort and perseverance that individuals will present to perform the group’s choices (Bandura, 1982). Collective efficacy differs from self-efficacy because the first is based on group, and the second is based on self.

The concept of collective efficacy refers to groups in general, such as work teams, departments, and organizations (Gully, Incalcaterra, Joshi, & Beaubien, 2002). In this research, we adopted collective efficacy exclusively to sales teams. A team corresponds to the existence of two or more individuals who interact socially, have at least one common goal, are gathered to perform relevant organizational tasks, have interdependencies in terms of workflow, objectives or results, have different roles or responsibilities, and are embedded in the same organizational system (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Specifically, sales teams mean organizational structures (e.g., salesforce of a retail store), whose members have complementary capabilities, are responsible for performing activities related to customer relationships, sales strategies, and sales transactions, and are committed to a common purpose (e.g., the volume of sales) (Dixon, Gassenheimer, & Barr, 2002).

*The Analysis of Congruence.* According to Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy and collective efficacy is created or reinforced by psychological processes of learning based on the consequences of past behaviors, on the observation of the success or failure of third parties, on the processes of social persuasion, and on the states of emotional excitement (Wood & Bandura, 1989). However, the assessments of collective efficacy also consider characteristics of team members and characteristics related to the quality of the members’ interaction (Gamero, Zornoza, Peiró, & Picazo, 2009; Charas, 2015). Therefore, salespeople’s assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy may be congruent or not.

The analysis of congruence is based on a fit between a measure regarding individuals and a measure regarding the work environment (e.g., organization, workgroup, and manager) (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). A fit occurs when the entities (e.g., individual and team) “share similar fundamental characteristics” (Verquer et al., 2003, 474). As teamwork requires interactions among team members, the team’s operation requires that the characteristics of individuals “fit with what is espoused in the group” (Ostroff, Shin, & Kinicki, 2005, p. 598). Considering a congruence between individuals and their work team, it’s expected a fulfillment of other’s needs to resolve gaps and to present a mutually offsetting pattern of relevant characteristics (Verquer et al., 2003; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005).

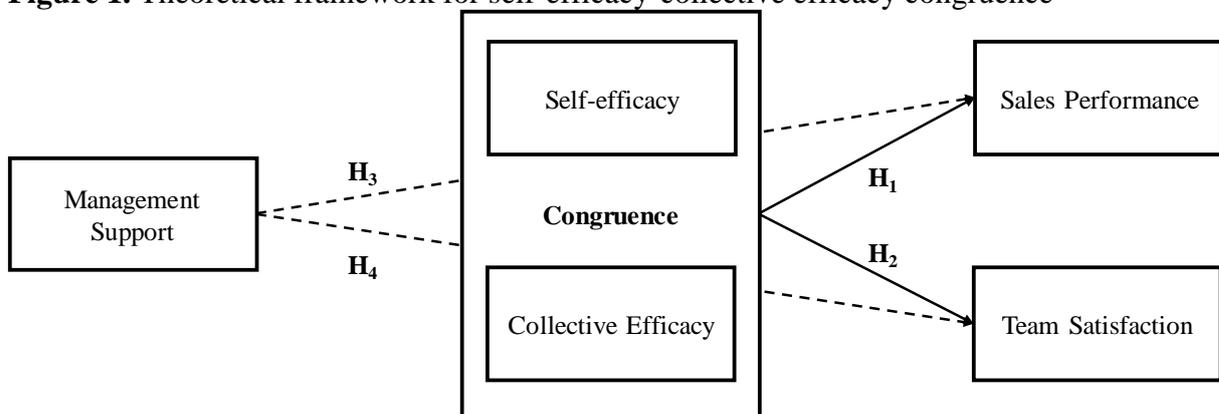
In this research, we are interested in the congruence between the assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy. Considering the similarity between self-efficacy and collective efficacy concepts (Chen & Bliese, 2002), this congruence is supplementary as the belief in the individual capacity and the capacity of the team are fundamental characteristics for a good work environment. Furthermore, considering that “behavior is a function of the person and the environment” (Verquer et al., 2003, p. 473) and that “individual perceptions of a situation are more important and more closely related to attitudes and behaviors than an actual situation” (Ostroff et al., 2005, p. 595), this research focuses on subjective congruence. That is, we rely

on the comparison between the salesperson’s perception of his or her self-efficacy and his or her perception of collective efficacy of his or her respective sales team.

### 3 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

The theoretical framework that we proposed in this research (Figure 1) is based on the premise that salespeople’s assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy are respectively assessments related to individuals and work environment. Self-efficacy and collective efficacy are regulatory mechanisms of action toward sales performance, which may be congruent or not (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Verquer et al., 2003). First, we proposed that the congruence between salespeople’s assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy explain sales performance and team satisfaction. Second, we expected that management support influences the congruence. In addition, we suggest the indirect effects of management support on sales performance and team satisfaction through the congruence.

**Figure 1.** Theoretical framework for self-efficacy-collective efficacy congruence



**Notes.** The solid line represents the direct effects. The dashed line represents the indirect effects.

*The effect of congruence on sales performance.* We propose that when salespeople’s assessment of self-efficacy is congruent with the assessment of collective efficacy, the higher the level of congruence, the higher the salespeople’s sales performance. The alignment between the salespeople confidence in themselves and the team constitutes a subjective person-environment fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), in which salespeople notice that they and the team “share similar characteristics and because of that similarity are compatible” (Kristof-Brown, 2000, p. 646). This compatibility between individuals and sales team results in positive attitudes (Ostroff et al., 2005, Yim, Chan, & Lam, 2012), such as the development of better strategies among pairs toward goals, increased member confidence in collective work, predictability of the team members reactions and expectations, and encouraging salespeople to exchange information and make joint decisions (Kennedy, Loughry, Klammer, & Beyerlein, 2009; Yim et al., 2012; Zhang, Wang, & Shi, 2012).

The sense of confidence, affinity, and cohesion between salespeople and team members enables employees to move quickly in consideration of multiple issues in order to find solutions without having to revisit the assumptions and constraints of the task environment (Rapp & Mathieu, 2019). Thus, the alignment regarding salesperson’s assessment of self-efficacy and collective efficacy produces the synergy necessary among team members for accomplishing sales performance (Ensley & Pearce, 2001). Thus:

**H<sub>1</sub>:** When there is a congruence between the salespeople' assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy, the higher the level of congruence, the higher the salespeople's sales performance.

*The effect of congruence on team satisfaction.* We propose that when salespeople's assessment of self-efficacy is congruent with the assessment of collective efficacy, the higher the level of congruence, the higher the salespeople's satisfaction with the team. Individuals tend to evaluate a work experience as positive when their capacity for execution equals the challenges and demands placed upon them (Yim et al., 2012). Because work in a sales team imposes interdependencies that require members to socially interact to achieve good results (Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006), a more favorable work experience could depend on both the salespeople's assessment of the team's ability (collective efficacy) and the assessment they make of themselves (self-efficacy) in relation to their capacity of work and integration to the team.

When salespeople with high levels of self-efficacy, confident in their ability to perform sales tasks successfully, work on a sales team in which they perceive the same level of efficacy, there is a propensity to evaluate teamwork as a more enjoyable (Yim et al., 2012; Wu et al., 2010). In other words, salespeople develop a positive perception of the team and present higher levels of effort and perseverance in the pursuit of collective goals as a way to keep the team viable and to achieve greater challenges (Kennedy et al. 2009). Therefore, there is a fit between individual and sales team in which salespeople tend to be more satisfied with the collective work with their peers (Yim et al., 2012; Aubé, Brunelle, & Rousseau, 2014). Thus:

**H<sub>2</sub>:** When there is a congruence between the salespeople' assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy, the higher the level of congruence, the higher the salespeople's team satisfaction.

*The indirect effect of management support through congruence.* We propose that management support directly drives the congruence between salespeople's assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy and indirectly promotes sales performance. The management support is exercised by an immediate superior of the sales team and involves the processes of reward, education/coaching, and information of salespeople (De Jong et al., 2005). A sales manager who pays attention to salespeople's needs and problems can offer support through training, direction, feedback, guidance, and encouragement (Lee, Cheng, Yeung & Lai, 2011, Kennedy et al., 2009). A supportive sales manager is a source of means and resources for salespeople to meet their role expectations and achieve sales goals (De Jong et al., 2005).

According to Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy and collective efficacy derive from social learning processes that also involve the interactions with the managers. For example, managers can contribute to the promotion of salespeople's self-efficacy or collective efficacy by assigning tasks and challenges that are possible to be fulfilled and providing sufficient resources for action (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Thereby, salespeople and sales teams are not overexposed to risk situations, developing the self-efficacy over time through an accumulation of successful experiences (Gong, Huang, & Farh, 2009). Managers can also enter into training programs success stories from other individuals or encourage socialization with successful people in order to inspire and persuade salespeople about their work abilities (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, managers can persuade employees through intellectual stimulation, discussions of work approach, challenging goals, and more compelling and encouraging style of communication (Gong et al., 2009). Finally, managers can reduce the degree of emotional excitement of salespeople before a task or goal by signaling a security and care environment (Park & John, 2014).

These practices of management support convey to salespeople a message that they individually or collectively (sales team) are able to successfully execute sales activities (Nahum-Shani, Lim, Henderson & Vinokur, 2014). The sense of safety, encouragement, persuasion, and support (De Jong et al., 2005) evokes beliefs in the salespeople that the group can achieve better results (collective efficacy), and self-confidence in themselves (self-efficacy) to foster sales accomplishments. Thus, the manager support acts as a motivational driver to generate the congruence between the assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy. Subsequently, the higher the congruence between beliefs (Wood & Bandura, 1989), the higher the sales performance because of the fit between individual and sales team that produces the alignment required for collective work. Likewise, the higher the congruence, the higher the salespeople's team satisfaction because of the positive experience of work experienced by the salespeople when there is a reciprocal relationship of trust. Consequently:

**H<sub>3</sub>:** Management support has an indirect and positive effect on sales performance through the mediation of the congruence between the salespeople' assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy.

**H<sub>4</sub>:** Management support has an indirect and positive effect on team satisfaction through the mediation of the congruence between the salespeople' assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy.

#### 4 Research Design

*Sample and data collecting.* We conduct a survey with Brazilians salespeople responsible for selling clothes and footwear and furniture and home appliances. The salespeople from clothes and footwear sell products such as shoes, socks, panties, underwear, belts, bags, jeans, clothing, accessories, etc. The salespeople from furniture and home appliances (similar to a department store) are responsible for selling products such as cabinets, mattress, bed, refrigerator, tables, chairs, stove, washer, microwave, blender, smartphones, television, microsystem, etc. We conducted a test One-way ANOVA with the salespeople's answers, and the results indicated that there were no significant mean differences between the salespeople's segments.

The salespeople from these two segments are organized by retail stores. They are subject to the same supervisor and to individual and collective performance goals, such as revenues, commissions, and margin of sales. In addition to the selling products, salespeople are also responsible for the selling services such as extended warranty of products, insurance, differentiated payment options, and stores credit cards. Furthermore, these salespeople must establish strategies to persuade customers who present a showrooming behavior that might undermine salespeople's self-efficacy (Rapp, Baker, Bachrach, Ogilvie, & Beitelspacher, 2015).

A professional interviewer personally presented the research goals and questionnaire and then collected the answers face-to-face. We prepared a presentation letter of the research highlighting the objective, authenticity, and responsibility of the study, as well as the anonymity and importance of the respondents. A total of 200 salespeople replies to our questionnaire. Most of them are women (82%), with an average of 32 years old ( $SD = 10$  years) and 4 years working in the company ( $SD = 7$  years). On average, the sales teams have been working together for approximately 3 years ( $SD = 3$ ), and they have 8 salespeople ( $SD = 4$ ). A total of 46.5% of salespeople work in clothing stores, 39.5% in shoe stores, and 14% in furniture and home appliances stores.

*Measures.* We used Likert-type scales with 7 points, ranging from 1= totally disagree to 7 = totally agree, to measure self-efficacy, collective efficacy, management support, and team satisfaction. We used the cross-cultural translation technique to translate the scales from English to Portuguese. Two Brazilian marketing experts were responsible for the face validation of the scales. After the cultural translation, we tested the scales in a pretest for checking the sentences.

Collective efficacy “refers to a team's belief that it can successfully perform a specific task” as are the sales activities (i.e., our team will be successful in sales activities) (Gully et al., 2002, p. 820). We measured the collective efficacy with 6 items from Rapp et al. (2014) regarding qualification, knowledge, confidence in the skills, preparation, confidence in the members and outcomes expectations of the sales team. Self-efficacy represents the salespeople’s belief in their ability to successfully execute sales activities (Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014). We used a specific scale to measure the sales self-efficacy composed of 5 items from Sujan, Weitz, & Kumar (1994), such as “I am good at selling”. This scale relates to the salespeople’s qualification for the sales job, the knowledge to sell, and the following expectations of the salespeople role in relation to customers: persuasion, detection of needs and closure of sales (Sujan et al., 1994).

Management support is the organizational support by the immediate superior of the team regarding reward, education/coaching, and information (De Jong et al., 2005, p. 1614). We measured management support with 5 items adapted from De Jong et al. (2005). The items refer to the manager’s recognition, clarity of team goals, directions for performing tasks, communication with the manager, and respect. Team satisfaction represents the salespeople’s degree of satisfaction about the collective work in the sales team. We measured satisfaction with the team with 3 items adapted from Tekleab, Quigley, and Tesluk (2009). This measure corresponds to the salespeople’s satisfaction with the team members, the way the team works, and how the team is integrated.

To measure sales performance, we ask the salespeople their percentage of sales goal achievement in the last 3 months. The use of the percentage of target achievement is recommended when we have salespeople from different segments and submitted to different variables of the internal and external environment, such as stores market potential, team size, and organizational target setting policy (Rapp et al., 2014). The average value of sales goal achievement in the last 3 months was 75% (SD = 19%). This variable obtained 38 missing values. We excluded from our analyses the respondent with missing values when sales goals achievement was the dependent variable. Finally, we adopted the following covariates: salespeople’s age, gender, and organizational tenure, and the number of members in the team.

*Analytical method.* We tested the effects of congruence through the polynomial regression model with surface response technique as described by Edwards (2002). The polynomial regression is appropriate when “researchers are interested in how combinations of two predictor variables relate to an outcome” and “has more explanatory potential than do difference scores or traditional moderated regression analyses” (Shanock, Baran, Gentry, Pattison, & Heggstad, 2010, p. 543-544). The regression model to test the consequences of the congruence describes as independent variables the simple and squares components of the congruence measures (self-efficacy and collective efficacy) and the interaction between them.

The congruence represents the line that captures the symmetry between the effects of self-efficacy and collective on dependent variables, and that varies between a low level of congruence (low self-efficacy and low collective efficacy) and a high level of congruence (high self-efficacy and high collective efficacy). To test how the dependent variables vary along the line of congruence, we added the constraint  $Self\text{-}efficacy = Collective\ Efficacy$  in the polynomial regression model. In contrast, the incongruence represents the line that captures the asymmetry of effects, varying from the extreme self-efficacy > collective efficacy to the

extreme self-efficacy < collective efficacy. To test how much the dependent variables varies along the line of incongruence, we added the restriction *Self-efficacy = -Collective Efficacy*.

The effects of congruence and incongruence are interpreted in terms of slope and curvature (Edwards, 2002). "If the curvature is not significantly different from zero, but the slope does, the congruence effect is linear" (Mullins & Sian, 2014, 196). "If the curvature is significantly positive or negative, the change in the outcome assumes a U-shape or an inverse U-shape respectively" (Ahearne, Haumman, Kraus, & Wieseke, 2013, p. 636). The interpretation of the slope and the curvature of the incongruence is similar to that of congruence in terms of significance. However, a positive (vs. negative) slope value represents a situation of incongruence in which the dependent variable is higher when self-efficacy is higher (vs. smaller) than collective-efficacy. About the incongruence curvature, assuming a slope equal to zero, if the effect of the incongruence assumes an inverse U-shape (vs. U-shape), the maximum (vs. minimum) of outcome is reached at the center of the line, that is, at the congruence point (Ahearne et al., 2013).

## 5 Results

*Validity and reliability of the scales.* We analyzed the validity and reliability of the scales using Exploratory Factor Analysis. We excluded 1 item of the scale of collective efficacy because it presented a low factor load. All the other items presented significant factor loads ( $\lambda > .50$ ) on their respective scales (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). We assessed the convergent validity of the scales using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As expected, all the scales presented values of AVE above or closer to expected (AVE > .50). We assessed the discriminant validity by comparing the values of AVE with the coefficients of correlations between the constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). No correlation was higher than the square root of AVE, indicating that the items of each scale present greater explanatory power than the other constructs. Then, we calculated the scale reliability using Composite Reliability (CR). The results indicated that all values were above the expected (CR > .70) (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 1 presents the results.

**Table 1.** Correlation matrix and descriptive measures

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5
1 Management Support	1				
2 Collective Efficacy	.539**	1			
3 Self-efficacy	.360**	.424**	1		
4 Team Satisfaction	.500**	.638**	.279**	1	
5 Sales Goal Achievement	.165*	.174*	.315**	.086	1
Mean	5.90	5.71	5.68	5.65	.75
Standard Deviation	1.37	1.10	.93	1.39	.19
AVE	.61	.48	.50	.57	-
AVE Square Root	.78	.70	.71	.76	-
Composite Reliability	.89	.82	.83	.80	-

Notes. \*\*p < .01; \*p < .05.

*Congruence group analysis.* Because the analyses of the relationships involving the congruence require a heterogeneity of data, we followed the procedure suggested by Shanock et al. (2010) to classify our sample into three groups: (a) salespeople who assessed self-efficacy above collective efficacy, (b) salespeople who assessed self-efficacy below collective efficacy, and (c) salespeople who assessed both at the same level. Table 2 reported the frequencies. The predominant group was the group that corresponds to salespeople who congruently assessed

the self-efficacy and collective efficacy measures (49%). A total of 26.5% of salespeople assessed collective efficacy higher than self-efficacy, and 24.5% assessed self-efficacy higher than collective efficacy. These results demonstrate the existence of sufficient sample for each group in order to estimate our theoretical model (Shanock et al., 2010).

**Table 2.** Frequencies of (in)congruence groups using collective efficacy (Study 3)

Groups	n	%	Collective Efficacy		Self-efficacy	
			Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Collective Efficacy > Self-Efficacy	53	26.5	6.20	.80	4.95	.87
Collective = Self -Efficacy	98	49.0	5.94	.90	5.88	.83
Collective Efficacy < Self-Efficacy	49	24.5	4.71	1.13	6.06	.75
Total	200	100.0	5.71	1.10	5.68	.93

**Notes.** ANOVA Collective Efficacy ( $F_{2,197} = 38.3, p < .01$ ); ANOVA Self-efficacy ( $F_{2,197} = 29.1, p < .01$ ); SD = standard deviation.

*Hypothesis test.* Table 3 presents the results for the effects of the congruence between salespeople's assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy on sales performance and team satisfaction. Hypothesis 1 argues about the effect of the congruence on sales performance. The surface test showed that the slope of the congruence line was positive and significant to explain salespeople's goal achievement ( $b_1 + b_2 = 18.605, p < .01$ ), supporting  $H_1$ .

**Table 3.** Polynomial regression with self-efficacy and collective efficacy congruence

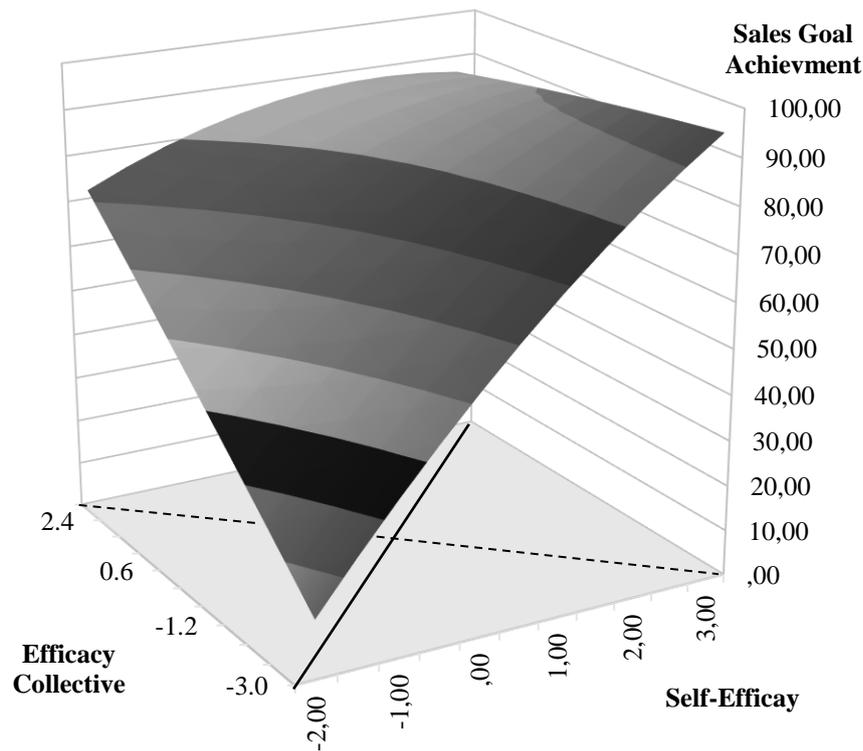
Variables	Sales Goal Achievement		Team Satisfaction	
	Beta	t-value	Beta	t-value
Constant	65.442	8.454**	4.083	9.468**
<b>Control</b>				
Gender	3.049	.779	-.042	-.192
Age	.142	.814	.004	.408
Tenure	-.161	-.642	.005	.354
N° Members	-.222	-.676	-.014	-.770
Clothing store	-1.564	-2.349*	.009	.035
Footwear Store	-16.645	-3.667**	.131	.510
<b>Main Effects</b>				
Self-efficacy ( $b_1$ )	12.167	3.376**	.424	2.040*
Collective Efficacy ( $b_2$ )	6.438	1.775†	.655	3.740**
<b>Quadratic Effects</b>				
Self-efficacy <sup>2</sup> ( $b_3$ )	-1.042	-.895	-.171	-2.552*
Self-efficacy x Collective Efficacy ( $b_4$ )	-2.741	-1.941†	.019	.246
Collective Efficacy <sup>2</sup> ( $b_5$ )	-.100	-.118	.055	1.240
F	3.971**		13.157**	
R <sup>2</sup> adjusted	0.169		.402	
<b>Surface Tests</b>				
Congruence line slope ( $b_1+b_2$ )	18.605**		1.079**	
Congruence line curvature ( $b_3+b_4+b_5$ )	-3.884†		-.097	
Incongruence line slope ( $b_1-b_2$ )	5.729		-.231	
Incongruence line curvature ( $b_3-b_4+b_5$ )	1.599		-.135	

**Notes.** \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ ; † $p < .10$ .

We created a three-dimensional graphic to illustrate the response surface for salespeople's goal achievement along the congruence line. As demonstrated in Figure 2, sales

goal achievement varied positively along the line of congruence between the salespeople's assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy. That is, to the extent that salespeople realize that they individually and their respective team can execute the sales activities successfully (an alignment), the percentage of sales goal achievement is higher. There are no other significant results for the polynomial regression of sales performance at the 95% confidence level.

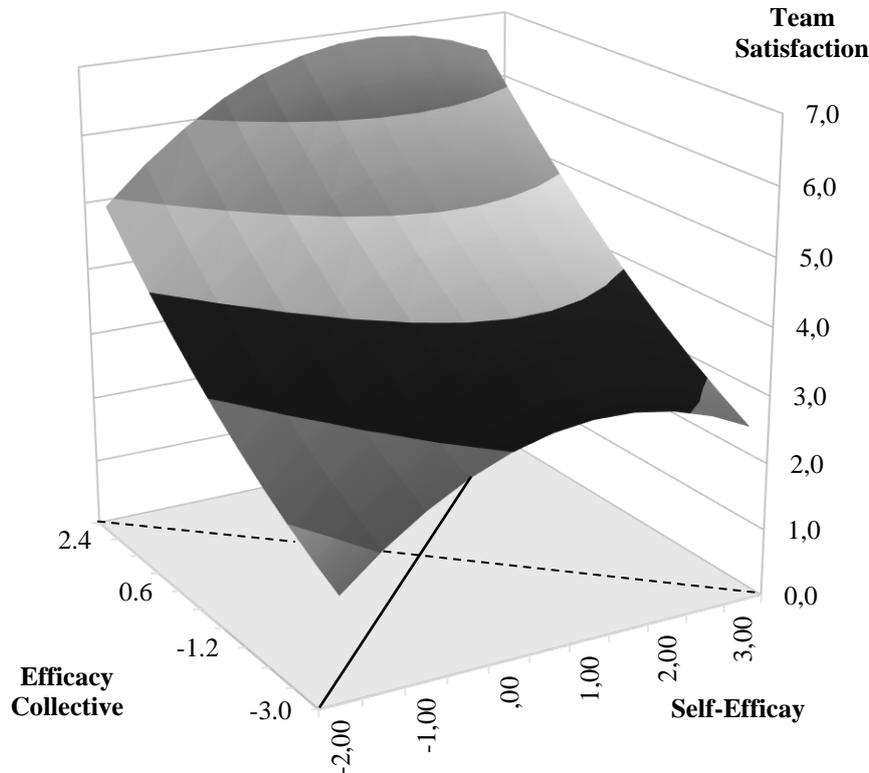
**Figure 2.** Response surface for salesperson's sales goal achievement



**Notes.** The solid line running diagonally from the near corner to the far corner represents the congruence line. The dashed line running diagonally left to right represents the incongruence line.

Hypothesis 2 refers to the effect of congruence on salespeople's team satisfaction. The surface test presented a significant and positive slope for the congruence line between the salespeople's assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy ( $b_1 + b_2 = 1.079, p < .01$ ), supporting  $H_2$ . Figure 3 demonstrated that team satisfaction was higher when the salespeople assess self-efficacy and collective efficacy both as high. There were no other significant results for the congruence and incongruence lines. The results also demonstrated that self-efficacy had a negative quadratic effect on team satisfaction ( $\beta = -.171, p < .05$ ), indicating that from a certain point of self-efficacy, the relationship between self-efficacy and team satisfaction turned from positive to negative. But, when a high level of collective efficacy accompanied a high level of self-efficacy, this inflection point did not exist, reaching high levels of satisfaction with the team.

**Figure 3.** Response surface for salesperson’s team satisfaction



**Notes.** The solid line running diagonally from the near corner to the far corner represents the congruence line. The dashed line running diagonally left to right represents the incongruence line.

Hypotheses 3 and 4 argue about the mediating role of congruence in the indirect effects of management support on sales performance and team satisfaction. For testing this mediation, we created a block variable (Edwards & Cable, 2009) from the polynomial regression coefficients (see equation 1), representing the joint effects of self-efficacy and collective efficacy on outcomes variables. This block variable procedure for testing the mediating effect is similar to adopted by Ahearne et al. (2013) and Zhang et al. (2012). We estimated the indirect effect using the macro Process (Hayes, 2013). Table 4 presents the results.

Management support had a positive and significant total effect on salespeople’s goal achievement ( $\beta = 2.320, p < .05$ ). When we included the congruence in the regression model, the direct effect of management support becomes non-significant ( $\beta = .627, p = NS$ ), suggesting the mediating role of congruence and the existence of an indirect path. The results showed that management support ( $\beta = 1.693, p < .01, 95\% CI = [.649; 3.524]$ ) indirectly influenced the salespeople’s goal achievement by the congruence between salespeople’s assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy. This indirect result suggested a model of full mediation or indirect-only mediation role (Zhao, Lynch Jr, & Chen, 2010) for the congruence, supporting H<sub>3</sub>.

We executed the same procedure to test the mediating role of the congruence in the relationship between management support and team satisfaction. Management support had a positive and significant total effect on salespeople’s team satisfaction ( $\beta = .504, p < .01$ ). When we included the congruence in the regression model, the direct effect of management support remained significant, but smaller ( $\beta = .201, p < .01$ ), suggesting that part of the total effect of management support on team satisfaction is direct and part is mediated by the congruence between assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy. The test of indirect effect revealed

a significant indirect effect of management support ( $\beta = .303, p < .01, 95\% \text{ CI} = [.211; .429]$ ), supporting H<sub>4</sub>.

**Table 4.** Results of the mediating role of congruence on sales performance and team satisfaction

	Estimate	S.E.	Lower CI	Upper CI	t/Z	p-value
<b>Indirect effect of management support through congruence on sales goal achievement</b>						
Total Effect	2.320	1.059	.227	4.413	2.190	.030
Direct effect	.627	1.091	-1.528	2.813	.575	.566
Indirect effect	1.693	.698	.649	3.524	3.152	.002
<b>Indirect effect of management support through congruence on team satisfaction</b>						
Total Effect	.504	.064	.377	.630	7.862	.000
Direct effect	.201	.067	.069	.332	3.010	.003
Indirect effect	.303	.055	.211	.429	6.117	.000

**Notes.** 10,000 bootstrap sample estimates for indirect effect analysis by the bias-corrected method. *t* values are reported for the total and direct effect. *Z* values are reported for the indirect effects. LLCI = Lower Limit Confidence Interval. ULCI = Upper Lower Confidence Interval.

## 6 Discussion

*Theoretical Remarks.* When working in a team, salespeople are exposed to several factors that go beyond their individual work. As a consequence of this exposition, the behavior and performance of salespeople are “a function of both their personal and team features” (Rapp & Mathieu, 2019, p. 305). In this research, we proposed and tested a theoretical framework combining both personal and team features, such as self-efficacy (personal feature) and collective efficacy (team feature) to explain salespeople’s performance and team satisfaction. Our results supported our theoretical framework and offer two main contributions to the literature in the relationship between salespeople and sales teams.

First, we contribute to Fit Theory by evidencing that the levels of sales performance and team satisfaction are higher when either both the assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy are congruent. While the current literature demonstrates the main effects of self-efficacy (Fu et al., 2010; Menguc et al., 2017) and collective efficacy on performance (Stajkovic et al., 2009; Gully et al., 2002), our results advance previous findings by revealing that when salespeople are organized into sales teams, sales performance and team satisfaction varies positively along the congruence line. Self-efficacy and collective efficacy are mechanisms of action regulation that influence the salespeople’s behavior. A congruence of these constructs represents a person-environment fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) that facilitates collaboration and communication, reduces conflict, provides a sense of more certain about future outcomes and behavior, and increases trust across team members (Seggewiss et al., 2019; Park & John, 2014). Thus, as the assessments of the individual and team are high, salespeople demonstrate more effort and perseverance to achieve individual and collective outcomes, as well as higher satisfaction in composing the sales team.

Second, we also contribute to Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1982, 1977) by revealing that the congruence between self-efficacy and collective efficacy plays a mediation role between management support and salespeople’s outcomes. Several studies have already demonstrated the mediating role of these constructs (Stajkovic et al., 2009; Kennedy et al., 2009) in relationships involving performance (Park & John, 2014, Menguc et al., 2017). Because self-efficacy and collective efficacy are regulatory mechanisms of behavior (Park & John, 2014), they naturally mediate the relationships between management support and salespeople’s outcomes. However, our results extended this knowledge by demonstrating that

the congruence also has a mediating role. Management support represents a source of social knowledge that provides an environment of more individual and collective confidence and satisfies the needs of salespeople and sales teams in the face of the work demands (Wood & Bandura, 1989). Thus, the management support increases the beliefs that individuals and sales teams are able to succeed in their activities, creating a synergy needed for good sales results and a positive work experience on the sales team.

*Managerial Discussion.* Our results demonstrated that management support is important to promote the congruence between self-efficacy and collective efficacy and, sequentially, sales performance and team satisfaction. Thus, sales organizations can help their salespeople and sales teams through direct support (Kennedy et al., 2009). The management support helps salespeople to deal with environmental adversities and complexities, reducing the levels of anxiety and vulnerability to stress before a task (Bandura, 1977; Nahum-Shani et al., 2014). Organizations should select managers who signal to the salespeople “that they are cared for, esteemed, valued, and belong to a network of communication and mutual obligation” (Nahum-Shani et al., 2014, p. 484). The manager’s training program should encourage employees by providing support indiscriminately, offering salespeople the conditions and confidence to solve the challenges by themselves, but not generating dependency of the manager (Nahum-Shani et al., 2014; Gong et al., 2009), which is detrimental to sales performance at high levels.

Additionally, managers should improve the salespeople’s beliefs of efficacy in order to create an alignment between individuals and teams. Managers can support salespeople and teams by ensuring that they have the resources required to perform their tasks, minimizing the risks of their actions (Kennedy et al., 2009). Managers can provide resources to create congruence, such as information technologies, storage and disclosure of customer information, enough time to perform tasks, psychological safety climate and reward, and recognition systems (Kennedy et al., 2009; Charas, 2015).

*Limitations and Future Research.* In this research, we assume that sales teams have work interdependencies by their nature (Dixon et al., 2002; Rapp & Mathieu, 2019), such as the organization of salespeople in stores or retail agencies, salespeople’s commitment to the results and viability of the team, salespeople’s submission to the same supervisor and the sharing of customer information (Tekleab et al., 2009;) However, task interdependence can be treated as a continuum that varies from low to high level (Katz-Navon & Erez, 2005). We suggest that future investigation measures the salespeople’s perception of the interdependence among team members and test their moderating role in the relationship between value congruence and sales performance.

We investigate the congruence phenomenon by a cross-sectional design. We know that the assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy are built over time as individuals perceive their progress and achieve their goals individually or collectively (Bandura, 1982). So, future studies can adopt a salespeople’s panel data that combine longitudinal data of sales performance and other constructs (ex. self-efficacy and collective efficacy) and a longitudinal design regarding the sales teams. Therefore, they could evaluate the effect of time on our hypotheses, showing more clearly how the assessments of self-efficacy and collective efficacy explain sales performance independently of the residual effect of sales performance over time.

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