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Ethical dilemmas of the medical sales representatives in pharmaceutical marketing and sales

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Abstract. This phenomenological study investigated the ethical dilemmas of Medical Sales Representatives (MSRs) in pharmaceutical marketing and sales in the province of Laguna. Specifically, this research utilized transcendental phenomenology and applied triangulation of the three methods: observation, interviews focus group discussion. After executing the identifying the significant statements, bracketing, horizontalization, and theme clustering, the researcher revealed seventeen (17) themes. As to the ethical dilemmas experienced by MSRs in pharmaceutical marketing and sales, the concept branched out to nine thematic concepts of their shared reality. Theme 1: Personal Growth and Professional Development, Theme 2: Product Knowledge and Interpersonal Skills, Theme 3: Be Knowledgeable, Friendly, and Patient, Theme 4: Understanding the Clients' Needs, Preferences, and Interests, Theme 5: Be Focused, Good Communicator, and Compassionate, Theme 6: Flexibility and Opportunity, Theme 7: Rejections and Failure, Theme 8: Satisfaction and Patient-Care, and Theme 9: Effectivity and Affordability. From their shared experiences regarding how the MSRs face ethical dilemmas in pharmaceutical marketing and sales, the researcher developed eight sensible themes: Theme 10: Handling and Dealing with Various Aspects, Theme 11: Keeping Patient with Positive Mindset to Solve the Problems, Theme 12: Learning and Motivation, Theme 13: Helping Consumers to Cure their Illnesses, Theme 14: Keeping the Clients and Building Good Relationships, Theme 15: Disappointed, yet Motivated, Theme 16: Analyze, Strategize, and Improve, and Theme 17: Modernized and Research-Based. The consensus among the participants' statements revealed that there are certain factors, strategies, and solutions that medical sales representatives consider succeeding in the pharmaceutical sector. The MSRs possess good communication skills and product expertise, which are necessary for every MSR and assist them in achieving their target sales, even though becoming one is difficult due to failures and rejections. In addition, effective marketing strategies and analysis must be used to fulfill the company's objectives. To better align their experiences and develop strategies that would make doing business with them easier, future researchers in the field of marketing and sales in the pharmaceutical industry should investigate to learn how healthcare professionals and their institutions perceive medical sales representatives and their organizations.

Keywords. Ethical Dilemmas, Medical Sales Representatives, Marketing, and Sales

I. Introduction

The pharmaceutical sector is primarily responsible for the research, development, manufacturing, and distribution of medicines. The industry has grown significantly over the last two decades, and in 2021, global pharma revenues reached 1.42 trillion US dollars. The United

States has the largest national pharmaceutical market in the world since many of the top pharmaceutical businesses are based there. China has emerged as one of the key participants in the sector, and in recent years, the expanding pharmaceutical market has had robust yearly growth rates (Mikulic, 2022).

In the Philippines, Pharmaceutical Industry is one of the fast-growing and in-demand industries, which makes it the third-largest pharmaceutical market in the ASEAN region. Although there are three segments where pharmaceutical drugs are regulated: the originator, branded generics, and unbranded generics, the growth may continue since new laws mandate that public hospitals provide affordable medicine to Filipinos by giving them generic drugs (InCorp Philippines, 2021). Hence, Dukart et. Al (2022) asserts that pharmaceutical companies should change their marketing strategies to maintain profitable and resilient operations, especially now that several factors exist. One of them is the modernization brought by technology and social media, inflation, geopolitics, and the present situation, the COVID-19 pandemic, which may affect their sales.

Pharmaceutical Industry applies almost the same method to the marketing and sales of pharmaceutical companies and focuses its business resources on the marketing and sales department. The Marketing Department collaborates tremendously and systematically with the Sales Department and the Human Resource Development and Management Department (HRDM). Then, HRDM filters the best-selected candidate with critical sales thinking. Simultaneously, the HRDM department, along with the marketing, creates the training with more simulated, realistic programs that the candidates will undergo to find a suitable sales employee of the pharmaceutical company. The most used, crucial, and essential strategic marketing program in the Pharmaceutical Industry is to employ and develop the best medical sales force and mold the optimum medical sales representatives.

Moreover, in the pharmaceutical industry, Medical Sales Representatives (MSRs) are unlike the sales representatives of other business sectors because they do not just sell products or offer services but create solutions for their specific target clients. Likewise, some of their tasks are to inform and detail the specifications of the products or services offered through the concrete and descriptive definition of the products or services provided. They provide more timely scientific studies, clinically proven tests, and product analyses conducted by authorized medical researchers and doctors in internationally and locally conducted research. In addition, they need to comprehend the clinical and medical needs of medical doctors and patients by understanding their welfare needs and essentials (Azuolay, 2020).

As the MSRs perform their tasks, they usually encounter ethical dilemmas. Mann (2019) affirms that they choose between a moral and an immoral act, deal with pressures to serve and help the company succeed and do business with personal temptations to take easy methods and solutions. They experience ethical dilemmas for reasons such as pressure from management, personal ambition, discrimination, or sometimes it is part of their negotiation tactics. However, most pharmaceutical companies value ethical behavior and punish violators of their ethical policies. Similarly, Caslib (2020) revealed that healthcare professionals choose what is right. While a dilemma may arise because of a conflict of values, ethics supports the need to hit the mean between two extremes by honing one's practical wisdom and deliberation. Thus, MSRs are challenged in employing their marketing strategies and improving their sales as they grapple with ethical dilemmas.

However, there has not yet been any phenomenological qualitative research on the ethical dilemmas MSRs face in pharmaceutical marketing and sales in the Philippines, according to a survey of related studies and other relevant literature. The study investigations

aligned with the Medical Sales Representative (MSR) dilemmas, particularly in Laguna Province. The ethical marketing problems of an MSR in the pharmaceutical sales sector are the primary topic of all research studies that do not closely resemble the researcher's study in the Philippines. Given the limitations found, the researcher decided to comprehend the moral quandaries faced by MSRs in pharmaceutical marketing and sales.

Hence, in this dissertation, the researcher wanted to understand the approaches of a successful medical representative and learn the methods and mechanisms of medical sales representatives in reaching a specific target. Likewise, the researcher sought to observe the characteristics of a medical sales representative in building rapport with the medical doctors and understanding how they face adverse phenomena in reaching target sales. Through in-depth interviews, the researcher also determined the ethical marketing of a medical sales representative in the stiff and complex pharmaceutical industry. Lastly, the sales tactical creatively made by the medical sales representatives were discovered. These objectives of the researcher revealed the ethical dilemmas of the MSRs.

Through this study, the MSRs will be more aware of the marketing strategies of the other MSRs, which may augment their sales in their specific fields. By understanding the existing phenomena towards the ethical dilemmas of the MSRs, they will realize what they need to improve. They will be assisted in handling their challenges when encountering ethical dilemmas with their clients and companies. Likewise, pharmaceutical companies may create new policies and training that may improve the MSRs' skills and help them be more professional in their work as they value ethical behavior.

1.1 Objective of the Study

The main concern of this study was to investigate the ethical dilemmas of MSRs in pharmaceutical marketing and sales. Specifically, using the phenomenological-qualitative research design, the study explored the ethical dilemmas experienced by MSRs in pharmaceutical marketing and sales and how they faced their identified ethical dilemmas.

II. Methods

The study adopted the phenomenological research design hinged on Creswell's ideas of understanding an experience from the participants' "point of view" (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Phenomenology is a form of qualitative research that focuses on studying an individual's lived experiences within the world. The phenomenological research method is appropriate and well-suited for exploring challenging problems.

Specifically, the researcher employed transcendental phenomenology as a guide to closely analyze the lived experiences of the medical sales representatives in the Laguna Province with the ethical dilemmas in pharmaceutical sales and marketing. This type of phenomenological method requires the researcher to access the participants' experience of the phenomenon pre-reflectively without resorting to categorization or conceptualization, which often includes what is taken for granted or those things that are common sense (Tuffour, 2017). Martisano (2019) argued that transcendental phenomenology provides a result that transcends the narrative and analysis through demystification accomplished by two major processes or functions, the Epoché, and bracketing. Both are essential to recovering bias-free information that reveals the true essence of the inquiries related to specific topics. According to Qutoshi (2020), reporting the findings in phenomenological research must focus on a detailed description of the phenomena before interpreting the description of the research participants.

The researcher utilized key-informant interviews as the primary tool to document the first-hand experiences of the medical sales representatives. Streefkerk (2018) explained that

primary sources provide first-hand information, such as interview transcripts, that give the researcher direct access to the research subject. According to Creswell and Creswell (2017), the researcher should interview 5 to 25 individuals who have experienced a particular phenomenon to collect enough data to understand and describe rich details of the essence of the experience.

The researcher utilized the purposive criterion sampling technique to determine the number of participants included in the study. As explained by Patton (2016), as cited in Gentles et al. (2019), the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for in-depth study. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn more about issues important to the purpose of the inquiry. The participants must comply with these two criteria to become a reliable source of needed information: 1.) must be medical sales representatives handling the Laguna Province area, and 2.) must be in the profession for two years and above. It was hoped that the trajectory of the significant experiences generated from the interview truly reflected the day-to-day life situation and stories of medical sales representatives. After following the set criteria, the researcher was able to select ten (10) participants.

The study used a researcher-constructed questionnaire consisting of twenty (20) open-ended questions to discover insightful experiences of the medical sales representatives in the Laguna Province with the ethical dilemmas in pharmaceutical sales and marketing. Ten questions answer the "what" of the study about the lived experiences of medical sales representatives. Another ten questions respond to the "how" part that explains how they handle their ethical dilemmas in pharmaceutical sales and marketing. The narrative interviewing technique was utilized to carry out the open-ended questions, and follow-up questions were generated during the key-informant interview proper. Probing follow-up questions were also used following standard qualitative interviewing procedures.

The researcher sought permission to conduct the study from the medical sales representatives through online platforms such as FB messenger, informing them about the study's objectives and being part of the research participants. This was followed by a key-informant interview with the medical sales representatives after the transmittal letters had been sent and secured. This was done by tailoring questions according to the progress of the interview (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2014; Ellis, 2016; Borja, 2021).

During the interviews, the researcher asked the participants the same questions as recommended by transcendental phenomenology. These interviews were conducted in a private room and confidentially. The participants were required to affix their signature on the "Informed Consent form" as a sign of approval and authorization to obtain the provision of using mobile phones for voice recordings. Approval for taking photos during interviews for documentation purposes was secured.

After that, the researcher conducted dependent analyses on their observational data and pursued emergent themes after gathering the data (Creswell, 2017). After determining the themes, the researcher met again with the participants to verify the verbatim accounts they shared during the interview as the final step. The participants clarified and rectified their responses, making the essence of the study valid and credible.

The approach that the researcher followed for ethical considerations was detailed by Creswell (2014), as cited in Capal (2020), for the systematic steps in the data analysis and procedures guidelines for coming up with the textual and structural description. Ethical standards generally accepted by all the researchers and academic institutions were carefully observed throughout the process of completing and after completing the study.

First, the researcher personally sought permission and involved medical sales representatives who were readily available and preferred to be part of the study without

coercion. They were also privileged to withdraw from the study at any time if they felt uncomfortable with the situation. Second, the researcher fairly exposed the medical sales representatives to the minimum amount of harm and explained the possible irregularities during the conduct of the study. They were informed about the overview and true objectives of the study, thereby maintaining the integrity of the researcher as no deception is undertaken to ensure the reliability and significance of the study. Furthermore, the researcher gave them an equal chance to be included in the study and allowed them to answer the interview questions at their most convenient time. Likewise, the researcher carefully followed the principle of confidentiality by protecting all participants' personal information.

The gathered data were analyzed using the procedures in transcendental phenomenological research design (Martisano, 2016). First was the creation of a sense of epoché and bracketing, which includes utilizing tools for gathering data. Bracketing occurs during interviews, placing the researcher into an unbiased, pre-linguistic, pre-structured state within which the mind can freely absorb experiential information analysis-free. Second was the collection of data from a sample of the population who have experienced the phenomenon. The number of participants must be statistically significant to achieve interview saturation (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

The third stage was horizontalization, where once significant statements or quotes are identified through bracketing, they were combined into themes again without subjective input from the researcher. This part is called clustering but uses response frequency free from bias. The fourth stage was the development of textural description (what) and structural description (how), derived from clustering and bias-free. The last stage of data analysis was writing composite descriptions, revealing the ultimate essence of the experience or phenomenon and imparting insight without partiality (Moustakas, 1994; Martisano, 2019; Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

III. Results and Discussion

The factual and personal narrative below is the **bracketing** part of the paper. Before making this work, the researcher shared his personal and professional profile with a description regarding the objectivity of the process.

The researcher holds a Master of Business Administration and a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration with a major in marketing management. Since 2013, he has worked for many pharmaceutical companies. In this study, the researcher actively participated in the study's execution while also being aware of his limitations as a researcher to avoid tainting the study's findings. He ignored any prior knowledge to assess the breadth and depth of the MSRs. He meticulously adhered to the research guidelines, especially when using humans as participants, to gather the necessary information most reflectively and naturally. This helped him avoid passing judgment on the study's findings. Then, considering the several protocols that had to be closely followed due to pandemic scenarios, he chose volunteers who fit the criteria and were willing to participate in the study. Ten MSRs were interviewed as key informants. With the participants' permission, the researcher used an audio recorder to capture the talk during the interview. While putting aside his opinions regarding the study, the researcher could properly record each participant's verbatim comments.

The researcher gave noteworthy comments inferred from participant responses during the scheduled in-depth interviews to offer the **horizontalization** portion of the data analysis. The presentation highlighted phrases and quotes from the participants' exact comments to make the findings credible and evidence-based. To respond to the study's two main questions, the

researcher made meaning of the participants' responses. There were 155 relevant statements were extrapolated as a result, according to the study.

After determining the themes, the researcher interpreted the important quotes before categorizing them into more comprehensive chunks of knowledge, known as **Theme Clustering**. The MSR's pertinent assertions and related ideas led the researcher to identify seventeen (17) theme clusters. The themes were arranged chronologically as they emerged from the researcher's interpretation. As what the participants shared:

1. As to the ethical dilemmas experienced by MSRs in pharmaceutical marketing and sales

Theme 1: Personal Growth and Professional Development. This theme presents why the MSRs decided to work in the pharmaceutical sales industry. Most of them are staying in their jobs because of their salaries that serve as their bread and butter to provide for the needs of their families. Likewise, they also settle in pharmaceuticals because of the benefits and opportunities that may come along in their journey as they grow professionally by learning not just about the pharmaceutical industry but also about sales and marketing.

I choose this job in pharmaceutical sales because it provides high pay, benefits, and frequently rapid career progression.

To provide for my family's needs and open my doors to countless opportunities.

For my family, take the chance to have that professionalism in a challenging environment.

I want to be more knowledgeable in terms of sales.

As shared by the MSRs, when they create profitable revenue for pharmaceutical sales, especially when they hit their target, they can support their families with their expenses through their salaries and incentives. Yohannes (2017) also revealed that MSRs must have competitive marketing strategies they can learn as they continue their journey, not just during their training. Their marketing strategies would lead them to gain more opportunities to grow personally and professionally in the pharmaceutical industry.

Theme 2: Product Knowledge and Interpersonal Skills. The second theme shows the specific knowledge and skills needed to succeed as MSR. Most participants mentioned during the interview that product knowledge is pivotal in the pharmaceutical industry. It was also shared among the participants that they are undergoing training which hones them and to have enough knowledge on the various products they are selling. In addition, it is common for them to be a good communicator because they stated that having excellent communication skills can help them to persuade their clients and come up with favorable negotiations. Aside from being knowledgeable about the products and good communicators, MSRs must also be determined, focused, and applies strategic planning since it is given that they handle vast areas and face enormous prominent people.

Product knowledge, adaptivity, and time management.

Excellent communication and presenting abilities are a must. A confident, persuasive demeanor and negotiation abilities, talents in sales and customer relations.

Communication skills and strategic planning in areas.

Knowledgeable in terms of sales.

Knowledge of your products and patience.

Similar to the study of Limbu and Kay (2019), the results revealed that communication skills and product knowledge are some of the most effective sales methods. These were highlighted as part of the Personal Selling strategy, creating a better salesperson performance.

Theme 3: Be Knowledgeable, Friendly, and Patient. In this theme, three effective characteristics were identified by the MSRs that serve as their strategies to become successful in pharmaceutical marketing. Since it was mentioned that product knowledge is pivotal in the previous theme, it is also important to be knowledgeable in marketing, such as product detailing. It is also essential to be familiar with the different sicknesses, illnesses, and diseases, for these will determine the medical supplies and equipment needed in the hospital. Likewise, being friendly is effective, letting the clients feel comfortable, which will result in establishing rapport with the clients. Moreover, MSRs must have long patience since it is difficult to convince their clients, particularly the administrators and owners. Thus, being patient and persistent is also vital, so when they encounter several rejections, they still strive to persuade their clients with the attitude of being friendly and knowledgeable.

The strategy I find most effective in pharmaceuticals is content marketing.

Product Detailing and Disease Knowledge.

Knowing what meds are commonly used inside the hospital.

Make rapport and be friendly.

You must have a positive perspective and patience with the accounts because of a lot of rejections you may encounter.

There are no specific strategies needed, but you must be patient.

In reality, MSRs are not just doing product detailing and product sampling; they also create programs and strategic approaches based on the situations. These were also affirmed in the study of Fickweiler, Fickweiler, and Uban (2017). Likewise, as Martin (2019) asserted, part of building a relationship with clients, particularly with doctors, includes having a friendly relationship with them.

Theme 4: Understanding the Clients' Needs, Preferences, and Interests. This theme reveals that the MSRs must discover and understand their client's needs, preferences, and interests. The clients can be enticed and hopefully create deals and agreements through this approach. The participants also shared that most clients want to receive something in return, such as rebates, dine-out, and other benefits.

You must have a better understanding to know the needs of your client.

The deals or promo of the product also benefit them.

A free present is appreciated by all. Your potential clients are the same as everyone else. With the premium sales strategy, sales representatives provide a giveaway or promotional item to their prospects to generate interest in their brand or product.

Active listening to understand clients' needs.

Good rebates to clients and consistent coverage.

The proposals and rebates that we can offer to them.

Comparable to the quantitative research conducted by Kasey (2018), knowing and understanding the client's needs, behavior, relevant information, and other factors are part of the processes an MSR should possess. This is also part of the market analysis process, which is commonly used in pharmaceutical industries.

Theme 5: Be Focused, Good Communicator, and Compassionate. Regarding the factors behind the success of the MSRs, the participants shared that they are focused on their goals, such as showing care to their clients and giving their best. Having good communication skills is an advantage, too, because it is the key to successfully persuading and gaining the trust of their clients. Through these, the clients will be able to feel the dedication of the MSRs as well as their compassion for other people.

Focus, care about the customers.

Dedication and good communication skills.

A successful sales representative must be persuasive, trustworthy, and able to deliver accurate information. To make a client feel informed, your communication should be clear, concise, and straightforward.

In my perspective, companionship with other people is one of the keys to success and always being kind.

In this theme, the findings from the study of Faisal et al. (2019) also revealed that an MSR should have consistent and frequent interactions with their clients. In addition, staying focused on the goals will create better sales, and showing compassion will surely make them successful.

Theme 6: Flexibility and Opportunity. This theme reveals the two common advantages of being an MSR. The participants prefer their job because it is flexible regarding schedule, time, and even the areas or places they visit. Since they are meeting different clients who are, most of the time, prominent people in hospitals and clinics, they are also gaining opportunities to become more professional and widen their horizons. The participants also shared that when the clients dine out, they usually eat in fine-dining restaurants. Moreover, when their clients go to some places across the country or abroad, they also experience it with them.

Flexible time and make appointments directly with the doctor or client.

Geographical exploration - moving and traveling for work are both rather frequent, as opposed to being desk-bound. Networking opportunities can help you build a successful, long-term career by interacting with a range of different professionals.

You can go everywhere.

Flexible time and the opportunity to interact with different kinds of people.

No time in and time out. Going with your phase.

You encounter different kinds of respected individuals Doctors, Presidents, Directors, etc.

You will expand your connection in the medical field.

Although the study participants take the flexibility of their work as a positive aspect, Kassay (2018) suggests that MSRs must be trained as well to be flexible and adaptive in every situation. Regarding the opportunity, it was also shared that MSRs with master's degrees are most likely to be promoted because they possess crucial decisive considerations than bachelor's holders. This is another opportunity that Kassay suggested the participants did not give that highlight because, in their case, the opportunity that they see is being with other people and getting the chance to go somewhere else.

Theme 7: Rejections and Failure. In this theme, the other side of the coin was revealed as the participants shared the disadvantages of an MSR. All of them mentioned that rejection is given, and every MSR should expect they will fail, especially at the beginning of the process. Likewise, it is also anticipated that the target sales will always be met. Although these advantages are unavoidable, especially in sales industries, every MSR must not be discouraged but rather be more determined to achieve the desired or target sales.

Rejection of accounts.

Even some of the top sales representatives will admit that they did not make their initial sales objective, which is one of the hardest hurdles for new medical sales reps. Although this might initially seem discouraging, the most crucial thing you can do is plan and make sure you're using the right strategies to achieve your sales objectives.

Treatment of the clients can make you feel uncomfortable.

Failed to get your targets and rejections.

Since failure and rejections are innate in the pharmaceutical industry, Rafi and Saeed (2019) suggest that MSRs must be equipped with a skillset in customer behavior, adaptive selling, and customer orientation. Through these, they can foresee potential refusals they may avoid as they deal with their clients. Thus, MSRs will have a better chance of achieving growth in their sales and goals in their companies.

Theme 8: Satisfaction and Patientcare. This theme uncovers the improvement and fulfillment of the MSRs' life as they contribute to their clients and patients. They mentioned that they feel satisfied with their job, primarily when they can provide for their client's needs, which will be given to their patients in the hospitals or clinics. Aside from the sales they aim for, they are after the clients' satisfaction and wellness of the patients, who are the benefactors of the service they provide. The MSRs are also considering the right medicine or product that the patients must take and the cost of the products. Thus, patient care must be considered as well in the pharmaceutical industry.

Flexibility and good satisfaction.

Recognizing and attending to patient concerns shows that you view them as unique individuals with specific needs. They may be more likely to respect their health journey and adhere to their care plan if they receive this kind of patient care.

Providing them with proper medicine molecular structure and affordability.

The effective and affordable meds they can get.

The results also confirm the findings from the study by Miller (2018), revealing that pharmaceutical companies aim not just for the success of the pharmaceutical business but also for patient health and safety. This is embedded in the proper ethical marketing standards for the pharmaceutical industry.

Theme 9: Effectivity and Affordability. Studying the impacts of pharmaceutical sales on society, this theme shows the two main factors that the MSRs consider. To bring quality and effective medicine to consumers or patients is fundamental in the pharmaceutical industry because this is the primary purpose of every MSR. Although it is also given that other pharmaceutical companies do the same thing, the next consideration would be the price. Hence, MSRs also try their best to offer and negotiate affordable and justifiable prices for their clients and consumers.

Bringing quality and effective medicine

Ensured the proper standard of health care.

By developing and bringing new medicine that improved the lives of patients.

We can help them to find a cheaper price for meds.

Provide a wide range of medicine, research, and development that destroy and manage diseases.

We can help in knowing new products or meds that can be cured some new kinds of viruses.

Aside from the basic requirements that every medical drug must be checked and approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), pharmaceutical companies, through their MSRs, must provide balanced, objective, and accurate scientific information about the medicines they are selling to all health professionals (APEC, 2021). Likewise, they should offer deals and promos to make their products affordable to their consumers.

2. As to how the MSRs face ethical dilemmas in pharmaceutical marketing and sales.

Theme 10: Handling and Dealing with Various Aspects. This theme presents how the pharmaceutical sales industry differs from other business sectors. Based on the responses of the MSRs, they handle territories like, in their case, they go around the province of Laguna, where they communicate and build good relationships with their clients. Most of the time, only one MSR handles a colossal territory, whether the whole province or a division of different cities. Every area they operate in needs a lot of money for investment, which is also part of getting the clients' attention and more confidence that you can support them in their clinics, hospitals, and even personal needs and wants.

Moreover, the participants shared that pharmaceutical businesses also deal with suppliers considering the quality of the products, price, and mode of payment. Likewise, there are some agreements, like the product should not be offered by other pharmaceutical companies or should be sold in a specific area since the product is being used already. Furthermore, pharmaceutical companies consider the product's legality to gain the clients' trust. There are several documents that the clients require before they approve and allow the product to be sold in their hospitals or clinics.

Because in this industry, you can communicate and interact and develop good relationships with respected individuals.

Compared to other industries, the pharmaceutical industry boasts a relatively high percentage of funds spent on extensive research and development and is one of the largest employers of scientists.

When selling pharmaceuticals, sales representatives must persuade doctors to write prescriptions for their goods when they have patients who might benefit from them. Medical sales representatives normally do not cross over into other representatives' areas. Typically, there is only one rep in a territory.

You have a lot to deal with, like handling taxes, negotiating with suppliers and decision-makers for your accts, and closing deals with your end users.

Pharma must invest massive amounts of money for six months up to 1 year while having the massive risk that the new drug will not get to market.

It is scientific, clinical, medical, and marketing development.

We are the ones who both have partnerships with suppliers and accounts.

The pharmaceutical sales industry focuses on its clients and the best treatment.

As also revealed from the study of Ghauri (2018), MSRs consider a lot of things, and they need to be more prepared to attain their target sales which is one of the significant differences they may determine compared to other business sectors. As confirmed by Fadare et al. (2019), the cost and expenditures of the pharmaceutical sales industry are incomparable to other business sectors.

Theme 11: Keeping Patient with Positive Mindset to Solve the Problems. This theme illustrates how the MSRs manage to stay in the pharmaceutical industry despite the difficulty of their job and the challenges and problems they usually encounter. The participants mentioned that it is innate to face several issues; hence an MSR should be patient. However, having patience alone is not enough because they suggest they need a positive mindset to overcome struggles. They need to focus, identify their problems' causes, and think of possible solutions. Also, in solving the issues of MSRs, they shared that they need to ask the managers' advice or approving authority for the following actions. Lastly, since rejection is natural in the

pharmaceutical industry, the MSRs shared that they need to be open-minded with the suggestions of the managers or supervisors.

Patience is a virtue because you may encounter lots of rejections.

You must be open-minded and focused to solve any problems may you encounter.

Every problem I always view in a positive perspective.

By identifying the cause of the problem and possible effects and then thinking of the solution.

If you have a problem in your field don't make any decision on your own. Call your boss and ask for advice.

Be open-minded to the thoughts and opinions of others.

Support your goals and actions and maintain your positive behaviors while dealing with the problem.

I listen, I analyze, and I find solutions based on my understanding, and approval of my upper management.

It was shared in the study of Pujari et al. (2017) that MSRs should consider the personal, cultural, social, and psychological factors that may influence their decision-making. These should be included when they are faced with trials and tribulations to come up with better solutions.

Theme 12: Learning and Motivation. Next to problems that the MSRs encounter, this theme demonstrates their challenges, which helped them continue and become successful in their profession. It may be a cliché, but the MSRs shared that they have learned from their mistakes, making their experiences meaningful and motivating. It was already shared from the beginning that they deal with several people, including their coworkers or fellow MSRs, who would share opinions and suggestions on solving their problems. Learning from the experience of others was also emphasized by the participants. They also mentioned that once they face problems, it motivates them to do and be better next time. While maintaining a positive attitude, despite the challenges, the MSRs shared that they must also be focused and strong. Thus, an MSR should not be easily demotivated but rather be optimistic in every situation that may come and take it as an opportunity to be the best MSR. After all, setbacks are always possible as long you stay focused, positive, inspired, and motivated.

Consider the opinions of others and accept challenges in positive ways and make the best solutions out of them.

You must be focused on your mind and must consider the opinions of others.

Those challenges serve as motivation to improve.

A patient attitude and showing you are someone who doesn't get demotivated by setbacks are traits that employers are looking for.

Staying positive will help you to be motivated and focused on overcoming any challenges from job rejections from your country's workers.

Those challenges serve as motivation for me.

Among the adaptive selling behavior that every MSR must have are the orientation of learning and intrinsic motivation. Morris (2018) affirmed that MSRs should understand and apply because they are part of the success factors of an MSR in attaining a specific task.

Theme 13: Helping Consumers to Cure Them. This theme pertains to the contributions of the MSRs in the community, which impact their profession. The participants mentioned that they are accountable for the needs of the clients and consumers for them to offer the right products and even services correctly. Primarily, they help consumers heal their sicknesses, illnesses, and diseases. They shared that somehow they serve as an instrument for

the healing of the patients because sometimes, hospitals have difficulty looking for medicines. Then, as the MSR, they will look for the drugs needed and sell them to the clients. Thus, it shows that being an MSR is not just focusing on sales but also providing the needs of the patients.

Accountable for determining a customer's needs, offering appropriate products or services, and making sure they have an excellent experience from beginning to end.

Contribute to the consumer or career experience.

It helps the community cure their illness.

As stated in the study conducted by the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (2021), Healthcare and Patient Focus is the number one principle that pharmaceutical companies should perform to sustain an ethical business. Like, they are accountable for whatever happens to the patient's health. Hence, the MSRs take on the responsibility to help their consumers, particularly the patients, heal as they promote their products to different health institutions.

Theme 14: Building Good Relationships to Keep the Clients. This theme presents how the MSRs deal with their clients, such as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and hospital managers or owners. Most of them believe that establishing a good relationship with their clients will help them not just to make a deal but to keep them and continue business with them. Some participants shared specific ways to build good relationships with them and keep them as their business partners, which are indicated among the significant statements. Showing respect and sincerity and knowing the clients' traits are substantial.

Know their needs establish trust, and make a good relationship.

Respect their time, moods, and effort.

Be welcoming and friendly. Making clients feel welcome and appreciated starts with a warm welcome as they approach the desk. Giving customers the impression that the pharmacy cares about their well-being and is willing to help builds trust.

By being flexible, transparent, and responsive to their needs.

Find out what your clients need.

I listen, I participate, I cooperate, and I follow what they want me to hear, to say, and to act.

In the Pharmaceutical industry, creating a partnership with the clients is essential. It would be a great help for the sustainability of the business to build a good relationship with them. As Mohammadzadeh, Aarabi, and Salamzede (2020) shared, Business Partnerships could also be done through contracts with a good deal, discounts, promos, and other miscellaneous benefits for the health institution and patient care.

Theme 15: Disappointed, yet Motivated. This theme reveals the feelings of the MSRs when their marketing strategies are not effective enough to get a deal or do business with their clients. Aside from the fact that rejections are innate, being an MSR is also draining, which will lead to disappointment. The participants commonly shared this during the interview. However, they still feel motivated to try other strategies ensuring that the next time it will be effective enough to make agreements with the clients.

I feel down and drained.

I feel disappointed, but I see to it that I will do my best next time.

Make it positive and make a new strategy.

Feel sad, but I see to it that I will make new and effective ways and strategy.

Being more eager to improve myself and learn how to make new plans.

Take it as a challenge, embrace it, and never give up.

I feel disappointed, but I see to it that I will do my best next time.

With the shared experiences of the participants on being disappointed, especially when their marketing strategies are not effective enough to get a deal with their clients, Harinranath, Sivakumaran, and Jacob (2019) suggest that the MSRs must be more productive in their tasks, adaptive to every situation, and inclusive on the dynamic of the business environments and sales unpredictability. Failure is innate, but being resilient would help an individual cope with unfortunate situations.

Theme 16: Analyze, Strategize, and Improve. According to the MSRs, these three actions are pivotal in coping with the situations, especially when they fail to achieve their target sales. Based on the interview, they analyze what causes them to fail. Then, they try to develop new plans or strategies to improve their performance and sales. Since various pharmaceutical companies also aim to achieve their target sales, a single strategy would not be enough to achieve their target. Likewise, their plans and strategies are not always suitable for all their clients. Thus, taking the extra mile or doing additional activities would be practical to advance and improve their performance.

Analyze what you did do and make new plans.

By planning and analysis.

Work hard and always focus on analyzing your areas.

By not thinking of failure as failure instead, think of it as a life way of showing you that you need to improve.

Think of better ways and strategy.

Make an effective solution and strategy.

By expanding my areas and taking the extra mile.

Determination on the field.

I follow the Vision and Mission of the company, and I base my strategy on the company's marketing plan. Then, I formulate my tactical programs on the situation of the market.

The shared experiences of the MSRs revealed what the study of Malik et al. (2021) revealed, which clarified that it is essential to have a marketing strategy to persuade the target market. Every MSR should know how to analyze and strategize to improve their performance and company business.

Theme 17: Modernized and Research-Based. The last theme that emerged after analyzing the significant statements displays how the MSRs see the marketing strategies in the future. They certainly believe that marketing strategies will be modernized as technological advancements continue. Some participants mentioned that it is possible that Artificial Intelligence (AI) could be used as well in performing content marketing. Likewise, since social media is becoming mainstream, influencer marketing would also be applied by the MSRs. Aside from modernization, research-based marketing could also be performed since people in today's generation are becoming more critical and data-driven. People who tend to rely on the consumers with proof of success, especially in healing, are one of the bases of the consumers. They do not just settle on what the doctors or experts are saying. Although this is critical, this could be used as effective marketing combined with the experts' analysis done through research or further studies.

I see marketing strategies in the future as more modernized and improved.

Marketing with AI. Short-form videos and user-generated content. Using technology to keep marketing and sales in sync. Influencer marketing and emerging social media applications. A return to experiential marketing.

There will be a much easier way to deal with and market because of the fastest upgrade in the global world of the internet.

The future marketing strategy is data-driven, so improving our data practice is an investment in long-term success.

Although research and development must be present in every business, Kumar and Kavitha (2018) also disclosed that modern marketing must be applied as the pharmaceutical industries embrace technological advancements. In this study, the MSRs foresee that the presence of the technology would greatly help them improve their future marketing strategies. Moreover, digitalization has been reaching industries; thus, similar to the study of Patwardhan et al. (2019), it is suggested that digital promotional tools must be applied in the pharmaceutical industry.

Textural Description. The fundamental themes revealed on the ethical dilemmas experienced by MSRs in pharmaceutical marketing and sales are as follows: Theme 1. Personal Growth and Professional Development, Theme 2. Product Knowledge and Interpersonal Skills, Theme 3. Be Knowledgeable, Friendly, and Patient, Theme 4. Understanding the Clients' Needs, Preferences, and Interests, Theme 5. Be Focused, Good Communicator, and Compassionate, Theme 6. Flexibility and Opportunity, Theme 7. Rejections and Failure, Theme 8. Satisfaction and Patient-Care, and Theme 9. Effectivity and Affordability. Although it is challenging to be an MSR because of contradictions and unending failures, the participants shared that they are staying because they are growing personally and professionally, considering the benefits and opportunities they are getting. It was evident among the participants that being knowledgeable about the products, promotional deals, and programs and being friendly, patient, and focused are effective ways in pharmaceutical marketing and sales. Furthermore, having excellent communication skills, compassion, and understanding of the client's needs, preferences, and interests would also help them to attain their goals as MSRs.

Structural Description. Based on the shared experiences of the MSRs in facing their ethical dilemmas in pharmaceutical marketing and sales, the following themes emerged: Theme 10. Handling and Dealing with Various Aspects, Theme 11. Keeping Patient with Positive Mindset to Solve the Problems, Theme 12. Learning and Motivation, Theme 13. Helping Consumers to Cure their Illnesses, Theme 14. Keeping the Clients and Building Good Relationships, Theme 15. Disappointed, yet Motivated, Theme 16. Analyze, Strategize, and Improve, and Theme 17. Modernized and Research-Based. These themes revealed how the MSRs deal with the ethical dilemmas they usually encounter in pharmaceutical marketing and sales. Evidently, they are loaded with tasks since they handle vast amounts of hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare institutions across specific locations, usually provinces. Since they are dealing not just the sales but also their relationship with their clients, the MSRs stay patient and positive with their meetings and negotiations. Despite the disappointment that they may encounter, they see to it that they learn from their experiences and take it as a lesson to do better. Thus, it is also necessary for their job to make some analyses, strategic planning, and improvement whenever possible. They also point out that in the future, marketing and sales will be more modern with evidence-based findings with the help of research or further studies.

Essence. The consensual statements of the participants pointed out that there are certain factors, strategies, and remedies that medical sales representatives consider to become successful in the pharmaceutical industry. Although it is not easy to become one because of the failures and rejections, the MSRs have strong communication skills and product knowledge, which are a must for every MSR, that help them to attain their target sales. Besides, suitable marketing strategies, together with marketing analysis, must be employed to achieve the goals

of the company. Once they can handle challenges and successfully deal with their clients, they can enjoy the benefits of being an MSR. Most importantly, part of the satisfaction is that they want to heal the patients by providing the utmost care with effective and affordable medical supplies and equipment. Lastly, the MSRs are looking forward to more innovative pharmaceutical marketing sales that are research-based and technologically advanced.

Verification. The researcher visited with the participants once again at this stage to confirm that the transcription of their comments was accurate. To ensure that the themes mentioned accurately captured their shared reality, the researcher also had to describe their experiences and defend the integrity of the participants' assertions throughout this phase. Finally, the participants verified the veracity of the examined phenomenon's core.

IV. Conclusion and Recommendation

The review of the participants' textual and structural reports led to the following conclusions:

1. The MSRs in pharmaceutical marketing and sales experience various ethical dilemmas. Even if being an MSR is difficult due to contradictions and never-ending failures, the participants expressed that they stick with it since it allows them to advance both personally and professionally, especially in light of the advantages and possibilities they are receiving. Participants agreed that effective approaches to pharmaceutical marketing and sales include being courteous, patient, and focused as well as informed about the goods, promotional offers, and programs. Additionally, having outstanding communication skills, compassion, and knowledge of the client's requirements, preferences, and interests would aid them in achieving their objectives as MSRs.

2. There are certain factors, strategies, situations, and solutions that medical sales representatives take into account to succeed in the pharmaceutical sector. The MSRs remain patient and upbeat throughout meetings and discussions because they address the sales and their connection with their clients. Despite their disappointment, they make sure to draw lessons from their mistakes and strive to improve moving forward. Since they oversee several hospitals, clinics, and other healthcare facilities throughout certain places, generally provinces, they obviously have a lot of work to do. The MSRs maintain patience and a cheerful attitude throughout meetings and discussions since they deal with more than just sales; they also manage their relationships with their clients. Regardless of whatever disappointment they may have, they make sure to accept it as a lesson to improve themselves and ensure that they learn from their mistakes. They must thus do analyses, devise strategies, and improve wherever feasible as part of their work. They also make the point that marketing and sales will become more cutting-edge in the future with the aid of research or other studies and evidence-based conclusions.

This study investigates the ethical dilemmas of medical sales representatives in pharmaceutical marketing and sales in the Province of Laguna. The pharmaceutical businesses, especially those that employ medical sales representatives or area managers, might learn a lot from their experiences. Likewise, the healthcare personnel from the health institutions such as hospitals and clinics would have ideas on the situations that the MSRs commonly experience and would understand the difficulty of their profession as well. Thus, the researcher provides the following advice in this respect, taking into account the research's findings:

1. Pharmaceutical companies should consistently conduct training for medical sales representatives focusing on product knowledge, interpersonal skills, and, most notably in

today's generation, maintaining good mental health since they usually encounter rejection and failure in their field.

2. For the MSRs, it is highly suggested to practice smart work rather than hard work since competition among other companies is always given in the marketing and sales industry. Thus, possessing the skills such as being friendly, focused, patient, and the like, combined with innovative strategies, would greatly help to augment sales and hopefully attain the target. In addition, the MSRs must be aware of the trend, not just in business but also in society, particularly in social media, to adapt to the digitization of marketing and sales in the pharmaceutical sector. Moreover, to keep doing business with their accounts or clients, attention must be paid to digital techniques of monitoring the MSR, sales, and clients.

3. For future researchers in the field of marketing and sales in the pharmaceutical industry, conducting an investigation that will reveal the experiences of the healthcare personnel and their institutions toward the medical sales representatives and their companies would help to align both of their experiences and create strategies that would easily do business with them.

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