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In the eye of the beholder: A configurational exploration of perceived deceptive supplier behavior in negotiations

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Abstract

Deceptive behavior in negotiations has been found to be widespread and to have harmful consequences. This study shifts the current research direction on deceptive negotiation behavior by adopting a *target's perspective* on deception and by using a *configurational* theorizing approach. Prior studies in supply chain management (SCM) and in other disciplines have studied deceptive negotiation behavior—as one specific form of opportunism—based on correlational approaches. In doing so, they have focused almost exclusively on the actor's (i.e., deceiver's) perspective—for example, investigating actors' motivations for using deception. As a result, a profound understanding of deceptive negotiation behavior from a target's perspective is lacking. In three studies, this research investigates what factors, on both the firm and individual levels, combine to lead purchasing managers (i.e., targets) to perceive supplier deception. The configurational analysis uncovers considerably more combinations of firm-level and individual-level factors that lead to perceptions of high supplier deception than combinations that lead to perceptions of low supplier deception. Thus, the contribution is twofold: First, the studies shift the perspective from the deception source to the deception target. Second, they uncover the causally complex nature of perceived deception in negotiations. Managerial implications include that purchasing managers, in their efforts to detect supplier deception, should move beyond paying attention to isolated factors, such as body language, and instead should focus on different combinations of power balances, negotiation stakes, and negotiator proficiencies.

KEYWORDS

configurational theorizing, deception, fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA), negotiation, opportunism

INTRODUCTION

Deception: “It depends on so many factors But for me, the victim’s experience is what is really playing a role here. I experience it myself, that more knowledgeable suppliers try deceiving me.”

– Purchasing Manager

Negotiations are important for forming and managing buyer–supplier collaborations (Thomas et al., 2021; Zachariassen, 2008). Recent supply chain management (SCM) research has expanded our understanding of specific behaviors in buyer–supplier negotiations (Kaufmann et al., 2023; Thomas et al., 2018, 2021). One such behavior, deception, is particularly prevalent (e.g., Adler, 2007; Gunia, 2019; Michelman, 1983). Deceptive negotiation behavior—as a specific form of opportunism (Lumineau & Oliveira, 2020)—has been found to have detrimental effects on buyer–supplier trust (Carter & Kaufmann, 2007), to increase transaction costs (Boles et al., 2000), and to lower the willingness of either party to negotiate again (Kaufmann et al., 2018). In addition, negotiations are considered “breeding grounds” for deception (Tenbrunsel, 1998, p. 330), and the phenomenon is still ubiquitous in buyer–supplier negotiations, as illustrated frequently in practitioner magazines (e.g., Christian, 2022; John, 2016; Vitasek, 2023).

Whereas deception has received scant attention in SCM (see Ried et al., 2022), it has been studied in other fields, including general management, business ethics, and psychology (Mason et al., 2018; Olekalns et al., 2014). These prior research efforts have differentiated the forms of deception (see Gaspar et al., 2019, for a review) and investigated its consequences (Croson et al., 2003) and antecedents (Olekalns et al., 2014). Surprisingly, these studies have focused almost exclusively on the actor’s (i.e., deceiver’s) perspective. Consequently, the past efforts leave us with little understanding of deceptive negotiation behavior from a target’s perspective (see Au & Wong, 2019). Only recently, and in the broader opportunism research, have SCM scholars started to turn to the target’s perception (e.g., Skowronski et al., 2020).

When adopting a target perspective, researchers must acknowledge that social reality is created based on an individual’s perception (Gioia, 2022; Weick, 1995). Humans constantly make sense of their environment to create their subjective reality and act upon their perception (Weick, 1995). Our unit of analysis is a purchasing manager’s perspective of a buyer–supplier negotiation in which the purchasing manager perceived the supplier’s sales manager as deceptive. Regardless of the sales manager’s (i.e., deceiver’s) motivation to deceive the

purchasing manager or whether the sales manager actually negotiated deceptively, the purchasing manager acts on her *perception* of reality (Au & Wong, 2019; Gioia, 2022; Thomas, 1993).

Because the purchasing manager acts as a boundary spanner within the buying firm, the purchasing manager’s perception of the supplier is further transmitted to other members of the buying firm (Eckerd et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2011), thus potentially affecting these other stakeholders’ decisions. Consequently, we define perceived deception as the target’s perception that the negotiation counterpart uses statements, behaviors, emotions, or omissions intended to mislead the target.

Opportunism, with deceptive negotiation behavior as one manifestation, is a causally complex phenomenon with various antecedents (e.g., Gaspar et al., 2019; Gunia, 2019; Jenkins & Delbridge, 2020; Mellewigt et al., 2018), which limits the value of correlational analysis in understanding deception. For example, extant research has shown that the use of deception is driven by situational factors (e.g., Koning et al., 2011; Tenbrunsel, 1998), characteristics of the deceiver (e.g., Tasa & Bell, 2017), and characteristics of the target (e.g., SimanTov-Nachlieli et al., 2020). As a result, “no single factor can predict whether any given negotiator is more likely to use deception in a given situation” (Lewicki & Hanke, 2012, p. 218). Given that a multitude of factors influences the actor’s use of deception, we assume, likewise, that a multitude of factors leads the purchasing manager to perceive a supplier’s sales manager as deceptive, which calls for a configurational investigation.

Similarly, research on opportunism that adopted a target’s perspective has investigated a host of antecedent factors for perceived opportunism. These factors include firm-level attributes, such as firm size asymmetry (Villena & Craighead, 2017), information asymmetry (Sako & Helper, 1998), and competitive orientation (Skowronski et al., 2020). They also include project-level factors, such as product complexity in new product development projects (Yan & Kull, 2015). Moreover, Arkan (2020) developed a moderation model composed of firm-level characteristics and targets’ personality characteristics that influence a target’s perception of opportunism. Taken together, these findings from

extant research suggest that the following attributes apply:

1. *Conjunction*: Rather than single factors, combinations of factors on the (inter-)firm, project, and individual levels jointly influence the purchasing manager's (i.e., target's) perception of supplier deception.
2. *Equifinality*: The factors combine in different constellations, resulting in the same outcome.
3. *Asymmetry*: The absence of the perception of supplier deception is not necessarily enabled by the reversal of attributes that lead to its occurrence.

We therefore conclude that perceived deception in negotiations is a causally complex phenomenon (Ragin, 1987, 2008). The notion of causal complexity (Ragin, 2008) leads us to adopt a configurational theorizing approach (Furnari et al., 2021). To further our understanding of deception in buyer–supplier negotiations, we investigate the following research question: *What configurations of factors lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception in a buyer–supplier negotiation?*

To answer this research question, we use a configurational theorizing approach (Furnari et al., 2021) based on three empirical studies:

1. To identify factors relevant for purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception, we conduct 23 exploratory interviews.
2. To prioritize and select the factors identified in Study 1 for further analysis, we use a best–worst scaling (BWS) approach (Louviere et al., 2015) with a different sample of 202 purchasing managers.
3. To examine purchasing managers' real-life negotiation experiences, we interview another sample of 68 purchasing managers. In the analysis of the data resulting from the interviews, we use fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) (Ragin, 2000), a configurational analysis approach.

The contributions of this research lie at the intersection of SCM and negotiations. First, the research advances theory on opportunism and negotiations by focusing on one specific form of opportunism: deceptive negotiation behavior. Importantly, the perspective in this study of deception shifts from the source of deception to its target. Second, the mode of theorizing in this research acknowledges and explores the causally complex nature of perceived supplier deception in negotiations, abandoning the correlational approach and instead using the more appropriate configurational approach.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Conceptualization of deception in negotiations

Deceptive negotiation behavior is a manifestation of opportunism (e.g., Lumineau & Oliveira, 2020). Past research efforts have differentiated among various types of deception (see Gaspar et al., 2019, for a review). One such differentiation is between active deception—that is, lies of commission, which involve self-interested informational misrepresentation (Lewicki & Robinson, 1998)—and passive deception—that is, lies of omission, which involve the non-disclosure of relevant information (e.g., Schweitzer & Croson, 1999). Rogers et al. (2017) further introduce paltering—deceiving others by making true statements. Additional research makes further distinctions in forms of deception.

Emotional deception involves the misrepresentation of different types and degrees of emotion (e.g., Fulmer et al., 2009). Moreover, scholars have acknowledged the existence of pro-social deception, often called white lies (Erat & Gneezy, 2012). Such conceptualizations of deception note that lies can either exclusively benefit the target, as altruistic white lies, or be Pareto white lies, which benefit the target and the actor (Erat & Gneezy, 2012). Similar to extant literature on deception in SCM negotiations (e.g., Kaufmann et al., 2018), we focus on selfish black lies (Erat & Gneezy, 2012, p. 723).

Moreover, contrary to extant literature on deception that predominantly adopts a prescriptive, normative ethics lens, the recent work in the SCM discipline by Kaufmann et al. (2018) follows the tradition of Bandura and instead adopts a descriptive perspective (Bandura, 1986; Wood & Bandura, 1989). Kaufmann et al. (2018) base their behavioral analyses on the psychological properties of the deception and the psychological consequences for the actor and the target. Similar to these authors, we use a descriptive behavioral lens and analyze self-serving acts intended to benefit the actor (i.e., supplier's sales manager) at the expense of the target (i.e., purchasing manager) (e.g., Gaspar et al., 2019). Adopting the target's perspective, we define perceived deceptive negotiation behavior as the target's perception that the negotiation counterpart uses statements, behaviors, emotions, or omissions intended to mislead the target.

Causes of deception in negotiations

A sizable literature stream has investigated factors that influence the use of deception and related opportunistic

behaviors, but it generally focuses on the actor's perspective. Investigated antecedent factors include situational factors, such as power (e.g., Gelderman et al., 2020; Koning et al., 2011) and importance or stake (e.g., Tenbrunsel, 1998), and actors' characteristics—for example, personality traits like moral identity (Aquino et al., 2009) and self-efficacy (Gaspar & Schweitzer, 2021), as well as affective states, such as experienced anger (Yip & Schweitzer, 2016). Additional research has looked at target-related factors, such as how the actor perceives a target's trustworthiness (Olekalns & Smith, 2007) or a target's perceived competence (Kray et al., 2014). We review and summarize empirical studies investigating antecedent factors of deceptive negotiation behavior. Details of our search strategy and a summary table of the identified literature are available in Supporting Information, Appendix A.

Our review of the literature reveals that prior studies have generated mixed findings related to antecedents of deceptive negotiation behavior. For example, some study results suggest that being powerful increases the use of deception (e.g., Gelderman et al., 2020; Malhotra & Gino, 2011), so that the more powerful party is more likely to deceive. Others find that the weaker party may be more inclined to use deception to overcome its position of weakness (e.g., Koning et al., 2011) or out of fear of being exploited (Steinel & de Dreu, 2004).

The link between competence and the use of deception is similarly complex and ambiguous. Some empirical studies have found that negotiators tend to deceive counterparties they perceive as incompetent (e.g., Kray et al., 2014), whereas other research has found that counterparties that appear proficient are more often deceived (SimanTov-Nachlieli et al., 2020).

Studies further point to the fact that deceptive negotiation behavior seems to result from a *combination of different factors*. For example, Aquino et al. (2009) find that a deceiver's moral identity and financial incentives together trigger lying in negotiations. Moreover, Olekalns and colleagues (Olekalns et al., 2014; Olekalns & Smith, 2009) find that situational factors (e.g., power), target characteristics (e.g., the target's perceived trustworthiness), and actor characteristics jointly influence the use of deception.

Only one of the studies we reviewed accounts for *targets'* perceptions of deception. Boles et al. (2000) investigated antecedents and consequences of deceptive negotiation behavior with a controlled, multi-round bargaining game. They found that “responders were suspicious when they knew that proposers had an opportunity to exploit their lack of knowledge” (Boles et al., 2000, p. 248). Their findings suggest that a purchasing

manager's lack of knowledge might lead the purchasing manager to perceive supplier deception.

We note in relation to these reported findings that most studies highlighted here are correlational. Although some point to the complex nature of the focal phenomenon of deception (e.g., Gelderman et al., 2020; Olekalns et al., 2014), none of them adopt a configurational theorizing lens.¹ Moreover, almost all studies we reviewed are actor centered (with the notable exception of Boles et al., 2000), and they investigate deceptive negotiation behavior in contexts other than buyer–supplier negotiations.

The dominant focus on the actor's perspective in deception research disregards not just the target's perspective but that the target's perception creates the target's reality (Weick, 1995). We cannot simply assume that focusing on the factors that motivate an actor to use deception provides a meaningful understanding of a target's perception of deception. Research from a target's perspective is warranted because such research can help the target—in our case, the purchasing manager—to more accurately interpret the actions and intentions of the actor—in our case, the supplier—and to protect against deceptive moves. We therefore consulted the broader opportunism literature for works adopting a target's perspective. (Again, see Supporting Information, Appendix A, for details on the literature search.) We identified seven empirical studies that adopt this perspective in the opportunism literature and summarize their findings in Table 1.

Six of the seven articles identified focus on firm-level attributes as antecedent factors of opportunism. Chen et al. (2020) and Morgan et al. (2007) found the buying firm's dependence on the supplier to be a relevant factor; meanwhile, Sako and Helper (1998) identified information asymmetry, uncertainty, asset specificity, long-term commitment, and customer reputation as firm-level factors that influence the supplier's perception of customer opportunism. Moreover, Villena and Craighead (2017) found that asymmetries in relational capital and size asymmetries influence perceived opportunism. Notably, they found that buying firms perceive less supplier opportunism if the buying firm is bigger, but the supplier does not perceive less buying firm opportunism if the supplier is bigger. Hence, factors that influence the perception of buying firm opportunism are not identical to factors influencing the perception of supplier opportunism.

Skowronski et al. (2020) investigated factors that influence two distinct manifestations of opportunism:

¹For a configurational study that explores the causally complex nature of opportunism but that focuses neither on deceptive negotiation behavior nor on the target perspective, see Mellewigt et al. (2018).

TABLE 1 Summary of empirical studies—Influencing factors of opportunism as perceived by the target.

Study	Correlational analysis	Manifestations of opportunism	Influencing factors of perceived opportunism		
			Firm level	Individual level	Project level
Sako and Helper (1998)	✓	No differentiation	✓		
Morgan et al. (2007)	✓	No differentiation	✓		
Yan and Kull (2015)	✓	No differentiation	✓		✓
Villena and Craighead (2017)	✓	No differentiation	✓		
Arkan (2020)	✓	Violations of verbal promises	✓	✓	
Chen et al. (2020)	✓	No differentiation	✓		
Skowronski et al. (2020)	✓	Perceived poaching and shirking	✓		

perceived poaching and perceived shirking. Basing their work on transaction cost theory, they found that “the level of economic development where the firm operates and its competitive priorities” (Skowronski et al., 2020, p. 1008) are firm-level antecedents of perceived poaching and shirking.

Beyond coordination efforts and mutual relationship-specific investments on the firm level, Yan and Kull (2015) considered project-related factors in their study on perceived supplier opportunism in new product development projects (i.e., task complexity and technological novelty). Interestingly, they found that mutual relationship-specific investments lead to the perception of more supplier opportunism. Moreover, product complexity is positively correlated and coordination efforts are negatively correlated to perceived supplier opportunism. Results on the effects of technological novelty on supplier opportunism were inconclusive. In addition to these factors, Yan and Kull (2015) also investigated differences between the United States and China to find differences in magnitude but not direction.

Finally, Arkan (2020) draws on psychology and sociology research for a correlational, variable-centered study. He found that the target’s perception of opportunistic behavior of the counterparty was influenced by “relational (perceived type of the exchange), attributional (type of the causal account), behavioral (type of the behavior), and personality characteristics (agreeableness and conscientiousness)” (Arkan, 2020, p. 583).

Our review of the literature on opportunism from a target perspective reveals that all seven studies are correlational and based on surveys or experimental data. Moreover, none of the studies focus on deceptive negotiation behavior as a distinct manifestation of opportunism. Given the multifaceted nature of opportunism,

antecedents may vary across different forms of opportunism (e.g., Lumineau & Oliveira, 2020; Skowronski et al., 2020); thus, we cannot assume that antecedents relevant to other opportunism types are equally relevant for deceptive negotiation behavior.

Our literature review demonstrates that the phenomenon of deception in buyer–supplier negotiations is under-researched from a target’s perspective. The reviewed literature on perceived opportunism has begun to acknowledge the target’s perspective, but it does not focus on deceptive negotiation behavior as a distinct manifestation of opportunism. Moreover, the many inconclusive findings on antecedents suggest that deceptive negotiation behavior is most appropriately investigated using a configurational approach. Focusing on a single antecedent appears unlikely to explain the complexities of deception; the factors influencing it co-occur and may have different positive and negative effects on suppliers’ use of deception.

Following a configurational approach (Furnari et al., 2021), we therefore conduct three studies to investigate the interplay of antecedent factors that lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception. We describe the logic and details of our configurational research approach in the following section.

METHODOLOGY

Configurational theorizing and fsQCA are ideal for investigating causally complex phenomena because both adhere to three key concepts: (1) conjunction (i.e., several attributes combine to produce the outcome), (2) equifinality (i.e., multiple combinations of factors can lead to the same outcome), and (3) asymmetry (i.e., although a

combination of attributes leads to an outcome, it does not mean that their absence will *not* lead to the outcome) (Furnari et al., 2021; Ragin, 2008; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012).

Our research approach consists of three studies. See Table 2 for an overview of the three studies, descriptions of the way they were conducted, and their purpose.

Study 1 allowed for empirically identifying factors that lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception. Study 2 was used to prioritize and select the most relevant factors. Together, Studies 1 and 2 resulted in a configurational model of factors that combine to lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception. This model guided our Study 3, in which we systematically investigate distinct constellations of these factors—that is, how the factors combine to lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception.

We conducted Study 1 with the primary purpose of gaining substantive knowledge to make an informed decision about the factors to be used as causal conditions in the fsQCA (Study 3) (Furnari et al., 2021; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Based on a review of the relevant literature (see the “Causes of deception in negotiations” section), we conducted 23 exploratory interviews with experienced purchasing and sales managers.

In Study 2, we used a different sample of purchasing managers to conduct a BWS Case 1 (Louviere et al., 2013; Louviere et al., 2015), which prioritized the relevance of the firm-level and individual-level factors identified in Study 1. A prioritizing of factors is necessary because in fsQCA, increasing the number of causal conditions k exponentially increases the number of possible combinations (i.e., 2^k). Thus, to avoid overly complex results that would be hard to interpret, fsQCA allows only a moderate number of causal conditions (Fainshmidt et al., 2020). Moreover, the sample size for fsQCA studies must be sufficient to produce enough diversity in cases, given the number of causal conditions (Marx, 2010; Marx & Duşa, 2011). For our fsQCA study, we targeted a priori a sample size of 50–70 purchasing managers, which allows for obtaining in-depth information while keeping a project feasible. With this target, no more than six to eight causal conditions can be used while still reaching a satisfactory case-to-condition ratio (Marx, 2010; Marx & Duşa, 2011).

To explore the links between these factors, we adopted the neoconfigurational method of fsQCA (Ragin, 2000) in Study 3. To that end, we conducted 68 semi-structured interviews with a different set of purchasing managers. Interviewees told us about one specific negotiation episode. Contrary to correlational approaches, where the focus is on examining the isolated “net effect” (Ragin, 2008) of individual variables on an

outcome (Berg-Schlösser et al., 2009, pp. 8–9), fsQCA is a set-theoretic method based on Boolean algebra and is suited to investigate the combined effect of a multiplicity of attributes on the outcome of interest (Fiss, 2011; Ragin, 2008).² For the analysis, we followed the typical fsQCA process comprising five steps: (1) definition of the outcome, (2) selection of causal conditions, (3) calibration of causal conditions and outcome, (4) construction of truth table, and (5) application of a Boolean minimization process (Arellano et al., 2021). Details on our sampling, data collection, and analysis are provided in the upcoming section, “Study 3: fsQCA of deceptive supplier behavior in negotiations.”

STUDY 1: EXPLORATORY INTERVIEWS TO UNCOVER RELEVANT FACTORS

In Study 1, we conducted inductive qualitative interviews with 19 procurement and 4 sales managers to generate context-rich personal stories. These interviews enhanced our knowledge of the focal phenomenon, “perceived deception,” from the buying and selling sides (Gioia et al., 2013; Kvale, 1994). In contrast to previous studies, this empirical effort allowed us to explore the target’s (i.e., purchasing manager’s) perspective and revealed a host of factors that lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception.

Sample and data collection

To allow for the inclusion of a heterogeneous set of experiences and perspectives and to ensure that participants had adequate knowledge, we targeted purchasing managers from various industries who had a minimum of 3 years of experience. We limited our target population to Western culture (i.e., Western Europe and the United States). Our final sample size was 23. In addition to 17 purchasing managers with a Western background, we conducted four interviews with sales managers to gain a sales perspective and to contrast and complement our emergent findings. In addition, we scrutinized the influence of another cultural background by conducting two interviews with purchasing managers from South Asia. We provide further details on the sample selection and

²For the mathematical details of the method, see, for example, Ragin (2000, 2008) and Schneider and Wagemann (2012). See Ketchen et al. (2022) for a discussion of configurational theorizing and applying fsQCA to SCM phenomena.

TABLE 2 Research approach integrating configurational theorizing with fsQCA.

Research studies	Concrete implementation steps	Purpose	Configurational theorizing activity	fsQCA steps
Study 1: Exploratory interviews to uncover relevant factors	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thoroughly review the literature. 2. Conduct 23 exploratory interviews following the critical interview technique. 3. Analyze the interviews using an inductive data analysis approach. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To gain a profound knowledge on deception in negotiations. • To identify factors relevant for purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception. 	Scoping	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Defining the outcome 2. Defining and selecting the causal conditions
Intermediate outcome: Set of relevant firm- and individual-level factors that combine to lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception.				
Study 2: Best-worst scaling to prioritize factors and select causal conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a best-worst scaling study with a sample of 202 purchasing managers. 2. Recruit participants using a random sampling approach on MTurk. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prioritize and select the most relevant factors for use in the systematic fsQCA (in the absence of sound theoretical knowledge on deception from a target's perspective). • To take into account limits in fsQCA on the number of causal conditions that can be used. 	Scoping	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Defining and selecting the causal conditions
Intermediate outcome: Configurational model of firm- and individual-level factors that combine to lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception (see Figure 1).				
Study 3: fsQCA of deceptive supplier behavior in negotiations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct 68 semi-structured interviews. 2. Qualitatively calibrate the 68 interviews based on a deductive coding scheme. 3. Undertake the truth table analysis and the subsequent minimization process using the R package QCA Version 3.12 (Duşa, 2021). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To conduct a systematic fsQCA to answer the RQ. • To find out what configurations of factors lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Linking 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Calibration of causal conditions and the outcome 4. Truth table 5. Logical minimization of truth table
Intermediate outcome: Configuration table that presents different combinations of firm- and individual-level factors that lead to high/low supplier deception (see Table 5).				
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Name identified combinations of firm- and individual-level factors that lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception. 2. Interpret results by revisiting the interview cases of each identified configuration. 				
Outcome: Theoretical and managerial contributions.				

Note: This table is based on Furnari et al. (2021) and the five steps of a typical fsQCA (Arellano et al., 2021). Abbreviations: fsQCA, fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis; MTurk, Mechanical Turk; QCA, qualitative comparative analysis; RQ, research question.

an interviewee list in Supporting Information, Appendix B.

We developed an open-ended interview protocol consisting of broad, probing questions based on the critical interview technique (Chell, 2004) (see Supporting Information, Appendix C). Our primary goal was to elicit information about specific incidents—that is, specific buyer–supplier negotiation situations in which interviewees perceived their counterparties as being deceptive. We asked targeted follow-up questions to enhance our understanding of the negotiation situation and the deceivers' behavior. As is typical for inductive qualitative research, we adapted our interview protocol based on emergent findings (Pratt et al., 2020).

Data analysis

We used an inductive, qualitative approach for our data analysis. We engaged in an iterative coding process, consisting of three cycles based on the coding process of Gioia et al. (2013) and Saldaña (2021). We provide details on our analysis in Supporting Information, Appendix D. The derived categories, corresponding subcategories, and exemplary quotes are presented in Table 3.

Findings

Our interview evidence yielded 10 factors that lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception in negotiations. They include stake, power balance, corporate culture, and relationship history on the firm level and knowledge about the negotiation process (which we designate as the “how”), knowledge about the subject matter of the negotiation (which we designate as the “what”), actor's personality, target's personality, actor's reputation, and target's reputation on the individual level (see Column 3 in Table 3).

Our interviews underscore the notions that perceived deception is a causally complex phenomenon and that different factors combine to lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception. We illustrate the interplay of such factors in several detailed case examples. For example, the case of Interviewee 6 illustrates the interplay of the power balance and what is at stake in the negotiation—at the firm level—with the purchasing manager's negotiation expertise when the purchasing manager encounters deceptive supplier behavior. Interviewee 6 worked for a big consumer goods company when the company decided to discontinue working with a small supplier:

The company owner, it was not a very big company, ... told me that if we didn't take this deal or if we would decrease this business, his business would go bankrupt. It was sort of a threat. It was definitely something we were discussing internally. But we did it [discontinued working with the company] anyway. I thought it was sort of a bluff. But for him, losing the contract would have a significant impact on his ability to make money. So, there were extremely high stakes at play. And that's also what I find in these types of negotiations; ... they tend to get more personal [and then] people try everything. (Study 1, Interviewee 6)

The case from Interviewee 10 further illustrates the interplay of a number of factors on the firm and individual levels. On the firm level, the buying firm was again in a dominant power position, and the stakes for the supplier were perceived as high. On the individual level, the purchasing manager was new at the company and lacked service and product expertise. Meanwhile, the business-to-business (B2B) sales manager had a dominant personality and was a seasoned expert on the product and on how to negotiate:

One situation, where I felt bluffed, was when I had just joined the firm and was learning my way around our business, still understanding ... the contract types, the different payment structures, the mechanisms of these contracts. Quite early on, a competitor of one of our biggest contractors approached [our company] with a very ... tempting offer. ... I made my calculations, the impact that this would have on our company. We then took this information over to our current contract holder to let them know that we had received a very good offer from a direct competitor and that, according to our calculations, everything pointed toward us having to switch contracts. ... I don't know if the account manager from the other side could “sniff” that I was new. He put on quite a performance. To be honest, it shocked me. He was super experienced, super-confident, appearing very powerful. He checked all the boxes [in terms of] what they say about people who have a strong personality. When he was sitting down, he was laid-back, completely in control, and once he talked, he filled the room. He ... had a very good

T A B L E 3 Study 1—Coding structure based on Gioia et al. (2013).

In vivo quote (Study 1/Interview #)	First-order code	(Theoretical) theme	Aggregate dimension
“The market was contracting ... very difficult environment ... because of the mini depression. So, it’s very important for us to grow our business” (S1/I17)	Economic situation	Stake	Firm-level influencing factors
“They are on the downswing. Their financial situation is really bad. Their service became terrible They promised to still deliver us the agreed-on quantity. But it did not happen. The sales manager even claimed he had never promised it.” (S1/I12)	Back against wall		
“Company A has some kind of patent We developed an alternative with Company B Company A was coming back to us, saying, you infringed our patent. We will sue Company B and we will sue you We had a contract with both. We could not simply stop ordering from either one. I assessed it as some kind of bluff from Company A I assessed the situation as okay We did not change anything, and in the end, they did not sue us.” (S1/I13)	Protect business		
“If I’m a bigger player, like we are, with high volumes, they will try everything to get the business with us, including deception.” (S1/I14)	Buyer power	Power balance	
“They are a really, really big supplier. We cannot simply end the relationship. And it was them approaching us with the proposal. Thus, they could do the first pitch, which provided them the cheating opportunity.” (S1/I18)	Supplier power		
“They are a highly specialized supplier. There are only 3–4 in the market. But on the other hand, there are also only about 3–4 buyers for their machinery. Thus, we have a balanced situation.” (S1/I17)	Balanced power		
“Will I trust a supplier that’s listed publicly with strict ethical compliance, quality assurance,	Ethics code	Corporate culture	

T A B L E 3 (Continued)

In vivo quote (Study 1/Interview #)	First-order code	(Theoretical) theme	Aggregate dimension
even if I don't know the person? Most likely." (S1/I17)			
"[Company], for instance, they have a reputation for being sharks. It's the company culture, a very financially oriented company like [Company], they have more of these kinds of profiles." (S1/I13)	Financial orientation		
"Our relationship is based on trust; we have been working on a lot of things together." (S1/I14)	Existing relationship	Relationship history	
"They will only bluff if there is no established relationship yet; otherwise, the risk is too high." (S1/I1)	No relationship		
"When I am not really comfortable in a situation, not well prepared in terms of knowledge. The guy in front of me will use that and bluff. He will use my lack of knowledge and preparation, my not feeling comfortable in the situation. All this opens the door to someone to abuse the situation." (S1/I1)	Target's lack of process knowledge	Knowledge HOW negotiation process	Individual-level influencing factors
"My negotiation partner was a cunning negotiator. I knew that he intentionally built up a threat and pressure environment. I reacted by likewise using bluffs and false threats." (S1/I21)	Negotiation game		
"On Thursday night I received a call from procurement ...: 'We're expecting from you a discount by tomorrow, ... a double-digit reduction in price.' ... A clear bluff from her side. She uses the time constraint to put me under pressure because she knows that I have mobilized my resources. ... I think she had a book called <i>How to Negotiate for Beginners</i> right next to her, and she thought, 'okay, let's use trick #7,' which is put pressure on the buyer based on time constraints. You know, it was not	Actor's lack of process knowledge—Target high process knowledge		

(Continues)

T A B L E 3 (Continued)

In vivo quote (Study 1/Interview #)	First-order code	(Theoretical) theme	Aggregate dimension
professional, and for me, the most important thing is good negotiators." (S1/I19)			
"Telling lies on things that the other party cannot judge if it's a lie or not because they have no idea of the industry, of the business, of the relationship. A situation like that was happening actually even yesterday. I was doing the alignment with a supplier So, he has experience in the industry and knows about our business and his competitors. Deliberately, he's using lots of technical information [that] I do not know, and also stating like some historical behavior of [interviewee's company] in general or allocation of business. All in an attempt to confuse and trick me." (S1/I12)	Buyer's lack of knowledge	Knowledge WHAT subject matter	
"It's personality dependent. Some people are poker players. They always will bluff, independent of the situation." (S1/I18)	Poker players	Actor's personality	
"I see it many times—a salesperson being more interested in personally winning the battle of negotiations. They will bluff, lie." (S1/I13)	Win-lose orientation		
"Compromises? A compromise has always two losers. The best compromise for me is no compromise." (S1/I16)	Win-lose orientation	Target's personality	
"I am a real fact-oriented person. They do not get the chance to tell me stories." (S1/I13)	Fact orientation		
"They are sales managers. They want to sell something; they only report the favorable aspect and deliberately leave out information." (S1/I13)	Sales stereotype	Actor's reputation	
"He also knew that the project guy did not like conflict, did not like to have those difficult conversations, and was much easier to negotiate with." (S1/I14)	Conflict avoider	Target's reputation	
"Our buyers have the reputation to be lazy and not negotiate to the last dime." (S1/I14)	Easy target		

understanding of his numbers, he knew his business, knew his price and cost structure, and was very good at that. Every time, he could make those calculations in his head and get it right almost to the penny. In the end, we still got a much better offer to stay with [his company] than the offer that we originally presented to them. So, it was possible for him to ... go lower. I was bluffed. (Study 1, Interviewee 10)

Contrasting Interviewee 10's experience with Interviewee 13's, we find that considerable negotiation experience is no protection from being deceived. Rather, we find that negotiation experience is an asymmetric factor (i.e., its presence does not change the outcome) and that its influence depends on how it combines with other factors (i.e., conjunction) (Furnari et al., 2021). In the situation shared by Interviewee 13, again, firm-level factors are decisive. Interviewee 13 is an experienced negotiator with superior negotiation process know-how. She negotiated with a supplier about a specialized production machinery that the buying company urgently needed. The stakes for the negotiation were high on both sides. However, the supplier was in an advantageous power position because the buying firm had no comparable alternatives. The negotiation went well. The supplier promised to deliver the machinery soon. But the purchasing manager described what happened next:

We were in urgent need of the machinery. But nothing happened. It turned out, they [the supplier] had fallen victim to a severe cyber-attack, which they did not tell us during the negotiation. They already knew but did not say that they could not access their construction plans anymore. They did not tell the full truth. (Study 1, Interviewee 13)

Despite the interviewee's high level of negotiation process experience, the buying company was deceived. In this specific case, the supplier knew about the firm's superior position in the market and the urgent need the buying company had for its production machinery.

Other interviewees highlighted how crucial know-how of the negotiation process is. For example, Interviewee 7 pointed us specifically to the need to split negotiation knowledge into two categories (Grodal et al., 2021): negotiation process knowledge (i.e., the "how") and subject-matter knowledge (i.e., the "what"). As a purchasing manager, his knowledge of how to

negotiate effectively was high; however, he admitted that his subject-matter knowledge was not as great and that a sales manager could have used this gap in knowledge as an advantage. Nevertheless, Interviewee 7 was able to negotiate favorably with an industrial machinery supplier by identifying ambiguities in the supplier's offer:

I asked the supplier: "How can it be that we are supposed to pay more than double the price than when we bought the machine ... three years ago; that does not seem to fit. Can you explain it to me?" His [the sales manager's] reply was really his big mistake. He should have told me something about technical improvements, updates, electronic details, what have you. I would have no clue how that affects the price of the machine in the end. But he did not use my lack of technical knowledge to his advantage. (Study 1, Interviewee 7)

Taken together, our interview evidence in Study 1 highlights that the interplay of factors on the firm level and the individual level leads purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception. Prior negotiation research has also found that different structural firm-level and individual-level factors influence negotiation behavior and, consequently, outcomes of negotiations (see Thompson et al., 2010, for a review). Structural firm-level factors define the initial negotiation setup and include the power constellation, relationship type, prior history, and stake in the negotiation (Lax & Sebenius, 2006; Sebenius, 2009). Individual-level factors include negotiators' resources (i.e., their skills, expertise, and personality traits) (Elfenbein, 2021).

To determine which factors have the highest priority for purchasing managers and thus to prioritize and select the factors to use as causal conditions in fsQCA, we conducted a BWS analysis in Study 2.

STUDY 2: BWS TO PRIORITIZE FACTORS AND SELECT CAUSAL CONDITIONS

Based on random utility theory (Thurstone, 1927), the BWS technique is suitable for identifying individuals' preferences (Louviere et al., 2013). We performed two BWS analyses of the Case 1 type (Louviere et al., 2013) to gauge the practical relevance of the set of factors on the firm level (i.e., five relevant attributes) and the individual level (i.e., six relevant attributes).

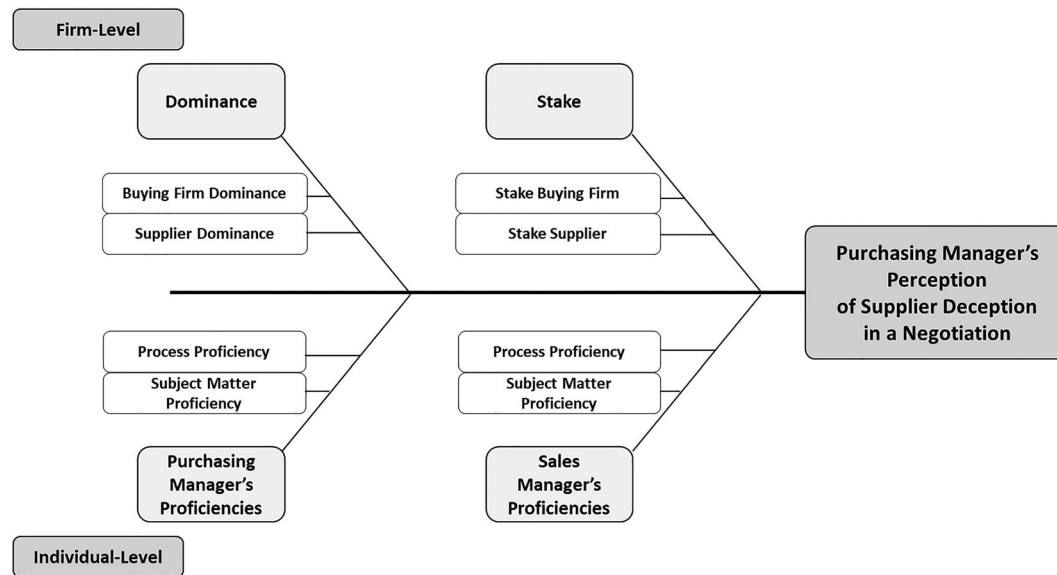


FIGURE 1 Configurational model of factors that combine to lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception.

Sample and data collection

Following recent best practice recommendations (e.g., Shang & Rönkkö, 2022), we used a rigorous two-stage process to recruit respondents for the two BWS studies from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Only respondents with the necessary experience in purchasing and B2B negotiations were granted access to the main study (i.e., the BWS studies). We provide details on the pre-screening process and demographic information of the final sample for both BWS studies in Supporting Information, Appendix E.

Results and discussion

The results of the BWS studies showed that, on the firm level, the relative stake in the negotiation and the power balance have the highest relevance for purchasing managers. On the individual level, the parties' negotiation process knowledge, the sales manager's personality, and the parties' relevant subject-matter proficiency showed the highest relevance. (For the detailed results, see Supporting Information, Appendix E.)

The BWS studies revealed the factors that practitioners deem the most important, but for purposes of the fsQCA, we still needed to select the factors from the two different rankings. We considered four attributes for each party, buyer and supplier, for a total of eight attributes. The attributes for the firm-level negotiation setup were

dominance/power structure and stake in the negotiation and for the individual-level attributes were negotiation process proficiency and subject-matter proficiency.³

Together, the eight empirically and theoretically grounded factors selected allow for a parsimonious examination of combinations leading to high supplier deception (HSD) or low supplier deception (LSD). In Figure 1, we present the theoretically and empirically derived framework that guides the fsQCA in Study 3.

STUDY 3: fsQCA OF DECEPTIVE SUPPLIER BEHAVIOR IN NEGOTIATIONS

In this section, we focus on Study 3 (i.e., the fsQCA). After introducing our data collection and sampling approach, we explain the analytical process, drawn from Arellano et al. (2021): (1) Define the outcome, (2) define and select the causal conditions, (3) calibrate causal conditions and outcome, (4) construct the truth table, and (5) logically minimize the truth table.

³Although the sales manager's personality had a higher relevance based on the BWS, we did not include it as a causal condition. We selected experienced purchasing managers as our informants and thus did not collect data on the personality of the sales manager.

Sample and data collection

We conducted semi-structured interviews with 68 purchasing managers who each shared details about one specific buyer–supplier negotiation in which they participated. We followed recommendations on case selection for configurational methods and ensured that our cases were comparable while also differing on the focal factors (Yamasaki & Rihoux, 2009). To ensure “sufficient homogeneity of the universe of cases considered” (Berg-Schlusser & de Meur, 2009, p. 23), we excluded transactional buyer–supplier negotiations, where only the one-time transfer of goods was negotiated (i.e., spot buys or auctions). All negotiation experiences we included are from the purchasing manager’s perspective and contain a post-negotiation implementation phase (e.g., maintenance service for a complex machinery or software set-up). In such cases, the negotiation behavior at the table influences various subsequent implementation steps and thus the economic outcome. Within the frame set by these case selection criteria, we aimed for high variance in interviewees’ demographics, negotiation issues (i.e., “what” was negotiated), and firmographics (see Table 4). By capturing a wide variety of buyer–supplier negotiations, we gained important insights into our focal phenomenon, perceived deceptive supplier behavior (Greckhamer et al., 2018).

For the main data collection, we asked the 68 interviewees to recall one negotiation that happened within the 18 months before the data collection, thus ensuring vivid memories of what happened. Following recommendations based on the event reconstruction method (Kahneman et al., 2004), we used a three-step process. First, we asked recall cue questions about the general negotiation setup (e.g., what and when) to increase the accuracy of responses. Second, we asked about the identified relevant firm-level and individual-level factors. Third, we requested information about specific negotiation behaviors commonly perceived as deceptive. Instead of labeling these behaviors as deceptive, we used descriptive prototype examples (Kaufmann et al., 2018) and asked interviewees whether they perceived that these or similar tactics were used by their suppliers. Throughout the interviews, we encouraged interviewees to be specific and detailed in their descriptions.

In developing the interview protocol, we focused on the factors selected as causal conditions after Studies 1 and 2. To ensure the appropriate scope and content validity of these interviews, we conducted pre-test interviews with eight key informants from different industries, thus covering a broad spectrum of buyer–supplier

TABLE 4 Study 3: fsQCA sample composition.

Sample composition (<i>N</i> = 68)	Sample <i>N</i>	Sample %
Work experience (μ 7.37 years)		
<3	2	2.94%
3–5	27	39.71%
6–10	31	45.59%
11+	8	11.76%
Highest academic degree		
Undergraduate degree	3	4.41%
Graduate degree	61	89.71%
Post-graduate (PhD)	4	5.88%
Age (μ 31.93 years)		
20–29	24	35.29%
30–39	38	55.88%
40+	6	8.82%
Gender		
Female	16	23.53%
Male	52	76.47%
Negotiation issue		
Service	38	55.88%
Product	30	44.12%
Industries, buying firm		
Automotive/transportation	15	22.06%
Chemicals/pharmaceuticals/health care	5	7.35%
Consumer goods	8	11.76%
Electronics	7	10.29%
Industrial machinery	6	8.82%
Retail/wholesale	8	11.76%
IT/telecommunications	3	4.41%
Financial services	5	7.35%
Service (excl. financial services, IT/telco)	11	16.18%
Firm size (#employees)		
<500	19	27.94%
500–2499	10	14.71%
2500–9999	10	14.71%
10,000–49,999	11	16.18%
>49,999	17	25.00%

Abbreviation: fsQCA, fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis.

negotiation scenarios. Based on their feedback, we refined the interview protocol. We provide the full interview protocol in Supporting Information, Appendix F.

Definition of the outcome and the causal conditions

Relying on deception as defined in the section, “[Conceptualization of deception in negotiations](#),” the focal phenomenon is the actor’s (i.e., supplier’s) active use of statements, behaviors, emotions, or passive omissions that the target (i.e., purchasing manager) perceives as an attempt to mislead the target. In undertaking fsQCA, the second step is defining and selecting the causal conditions of the focal phenomenon. Closely adhering to the configurational approach (Furnari et al., 2021), we selected the causal conditions based on theoretical insights from the literature (see the “[Theoretical background](#)” section) and our empirical efforts in Studies 1 and 2. In the following paragraphs, we define the selected causal conditions.

Firm level: Relative firm dominance

Findings from Study 1 and the literature (e.g., Cheng et al., 2021; Kim et al., 2005) highlight the importance of power in business negotiations. Moreover, “relative dependence” is among the most relevant antecedents of opportunistic behavior (Wang & Yang, 2013) and has been found to influence the perception of opportunism (Chen et al., 2020). In the SCM context, power can be assessed based on the independence of each party and the parties’ ability to influence one another (Cheng et al., 2021; Emerson, 1962; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). A key driver of a buying firm’s independence from a supplier is the number of available alternative suppliers (Krajewski et al., 2005); the higher this number, the more powerful the buying firm. For a supplier, independence is high when, for example, a buying firm’s percentage share of its total sales is rather low.

Methodological constraints of the fsQCA method do not allow us to capture the full range of power constellations using only one causal condition.⁴ Therefore, our

⁴In capturing the full range of power constellations with only one causal condition, the calibration might look like this: 1 for full buying firm dominance, 0.75 for some buying firm dominance, 0.5 for neither buying firm nor supplier dominance, 0.25 for some supplier dominance, and 0 for full supplier dominance. However, fsQCA has a methodological constraint that excludes from the logical minimization process any cases assigned a 0.5 (the point of maximum ambiguity) for any of the causal conditions. The reason is that before this minimization process occurs, all cases are sorted in a “truth table.” The truth table’s rows identify all logical possible combinations of the causal conditions. Each case is assigned to the truth table row for which it has a set membership of greater than 0.5. However, if a case is assigned 0.5 for any of the causal conditions, it does not have set membership of greater than 0.5 in any logically possible truth table row, and thus, it

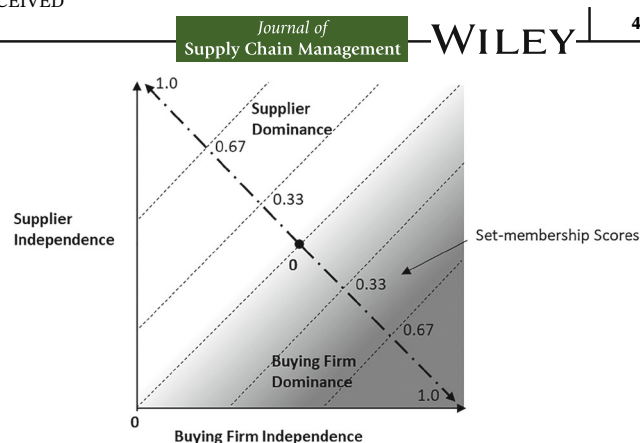


FIGURE 2 Calibration of buying firm and supplier dominance.

study includes buying firm dominance (BD) and supplier dominance (SD) as distinct attributes. This approach allows us to express one party’s dominance in relation to the other party and to use these two causal conditions to analytically capture a balanced situation, in which neither party is dominant. Figure 2 illustrates our subsequent calibration strategy for buyer and supplier dominance.

Firm level: Stake in the negotiation

We conceptualize the parties’ stake in the negotiation in relation to the negotiation’s economic importance for the respective party. In other words, how important is it for the firm to negotiate a (beneficial) deal? For a buying firm, negotiations seem critical primarily because of time pressure or financial pressure, and for a supplier, high stakes might be related to a large sales volume, the profit margin, or winning a reputable customer.

Individual level: Negotiation process proficiency

We conceptualize negotiation process proficiency as knowledge about how to negotiate (i.e., the “how” elements). Negotiation skills have been acknowledged as essential for managers and as critical for firms’ competitive advantage (e.g., Grennan, 2014; Lax & Sebenius, 1986). Such skills are relevant in all negotiation phases, from preparation to implementation, allowing negotiators to prepare, structure, conduct, and moderate the entire negotiation process (Jang et al., 2018).

cannot be attributed to any of these rows. Thus, it is not part of the subsequent logical minimization process. For a more detailed explanation, see Schneider and Wagemann (2012, pp. 100–101).

Negotiation process proficiency comprises the knowledge and the skillful application of negotiation tactics (e.g., targeted influencing and designing smart deal structures), and such proficiency may be obtained through experience or training (Weingart et al., 1999).

Individual level: Subject-matter proficiency

Subject-matter proficiency is the knowledge the individual negotiator (purchasing manager or sales manager) has about the negotiation's purpose or issue (i.e., the "what" content of the negotiation). Subject-matter proficiency comprises (technical/practical) knowledge about the service or product; the underlying engineering, manufacturing, or service processes; the counterparty's capabilities; and general commercial knowledge (e.g., market knowledge, industry knowledge, or cost structures) (see Zhang et al., 2011).

Calibration of the outcome and the causal conditions

The third step of an fsQCA, the calibration, carves out the relevant variance between cases (Misangyi et al., 2017). All causal conditions and the outcome are expressed as sets in which each case is assigned a degree of set membership. Set membership ranges from 0.0 (full non-membership) to 1.0 (full membership) (Ragin, 2008). We used four-value fuzzy sets (i.e., 0, 0.33, 0.67, and 1) for the outcome and the causal conditions and assigned cases set membership based on a predefined coding scheme (e.g., Crilly, 2011; Dwivedi et al., 2018).

To ensure reliability, two researchers independently assigned one of the four set-membership scores (Henik, 2015; Saldaña, 2021). The intercoder reliability was assessed as substantial to almost perfect (Landis & Koch, 1977), with linear weighted kappas between 0.604 and 0.867 and quadratic weighted kappas between 0.684 and 0.922 (Cohen, 1968). Discrepancies between the researchers were resolved through discussions, leading to a forced intercoder reliability of 100% (Crilly, 2011). For detailed information on the calibration process, the results of the weighted kappa, and the predefined coding scheme using exemplary quotes, we refer readers to the relevant Supporting Information, Appendices G–I, respectively.

Necessity and sufficiency analysis

For the necessity and sufficiency analysis, we used the R package QCA, Version 3.12 (Duşa, 2021). We first

conducted a necessary condition analysis (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). Based on the 0.9 consistency threshold, none of the eight conditions are deemed necessary for perceiving either HSD or LSD. We report the results of this analysis in Supporting Information, Appendix J, and also point readers to our robustness tests, which further underscore the trustworthiness of our results, beyond the somewhat arbitrary nature of such thresholds.

In the fourth step of the fsQCA, we constructed and analyzed two truth tables for sufficient conditions: one for HSD and one for LSD. Listing all possible combinations of causal conditions resulted in 256 (i.e., 2^8) truth table rows.

To determine which rows to include in the logical minimization process, we set a minimum acceptable frequency threshold, a minimum acceptable raw consistency threshold, and a minimum acceptable proportional reduction in inconsistency (PRI). In accordance with other studies involving a medium sample size, we set the frequency cutoff to one case (Arellano et al., 2021; Crilly, 2011). Absent a universally agreed-on PRI cutoff value (Greckhamer et al., 2018), we used 0.75 for both analyses. (For our data, selecting 0.75 as a cutoff excludes all truth table rows involving deviant cases.) We used a raw consistency cutoff of 0.889 for HSD and of 0.91 for LSD, both of which are above the recommended minimum cutoff of 0.80 (Ragin, 2008; Schneider & Wagemann, 2012).

All truth table rows that meet the minimum required threshold for consistency are labeled 1 (i.e., the outcome is consistently present). All other rows are labeled 0 (i.e., the outcome is not consistently present). Only rows assigned a 1 were included in the subsequent minimization process. Abbreviated versions of both truth tables are reported in Supporting Information, Appendix K.

We used the Quine–McCluskey algorithm for the logical minimization. Absent theoretical guidance, we refrained from assumptions about the logical remainders (i.e., rows providing no empirical evidence) to obtain the most conservative solution term (i.e., complex solution) (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). We derived exactly one solution output (no model ambiguity) and, to achieve the parsimonious solution, applied the enhanced standard analysis (ESA) (Schneider & Wagemann, 2012). (See Supporting Information, Appendix L, for details on the ESA.)

To assess the robustness of the results, we changed the raw consistency cutoff to a higher and lower value (Tóth et al., 2017), used a higher and lower PRI inclusion cutoff, and increased the frequency cutoff (Crilly, 2011). Tests for both the absence and the presence of the outcome showed that the solution was stable. (See Supporting Information, Appendix M, for the results of the robustness tests performed.)

Results and discussion

Table 5 shows the study results indicating different configurations of factors that lead a purchasing manager to perceive HSD and LSD (Fiss, 2011).

We assessed the reliability of our results based on solution consistency and solution coverage (Misangyi et al., 2017). The overall solution consistencies—0.958 for HSD and 0.966 for LSD—are well above the frequently used 0.80 threshold (Ragin, 2008; Schneider & Wagemann, 2010). Solution coverages (i.e., the empirical importance of one solution path) are 0.556 for HSD and 0.340 for LSD. Thus, the HSD solution covers about 55.6% of the empirical cases with the outcome, and the LSD solution covers about 34.0%—results similar to previous fsQCA studies (e.g., Fiss, 2011; Reimann et al., 2017). Thus, our solutions show high reliability.

In naming the resulting configurations, Furnari et al. (2021) recommend labels that capture the whole. On the one hand, our naming logic relies on clear commonalities and differences in the configurations related to the negotiation proficiencies of the purchasing manager. As Table 5 shows, purchasing managers perceive high degrees of supplier deception when a purchasing manager's *process* proficiency is both high (HSD I–HSD III) and low (HSD IV–HSD VI); purchasing managers also perceive low degrees of supplier deception when a purchasing manager's *subject-matter* proficiency is high (LSD I–LSD II). We therefore interpret and discuss the configurations based on these negotiation proficiencies of the purchasing manager. Throughout this discussion, power quotes from the cases illustrate the analysis, and propositions at the end of each subsection reflect our synthesis of the findings and explanations.

HSD and a purchasing manager with high negotiation process proficiency

Different subgroups of purchasing managers perceive supplier deception for different reasons. The constellations in this subgroup are the Short-Cutter (HSD I), Chess Masters (HSD II), and “What” Meets “How” (HSD III).

The Short-Cutter (HSD I)

In the Short-Cutter (HSD I) constellation, high degrees of proficiency (both in process and in subject matter) do not protect the purchasing manager from perceiving supplier deception in a high-stakes negotiation. The purchasing manager perceives the dominant supplier's taking a short-cut to quickly escape the negotiation game by using false threats and (abusing) its dominant position. For

instance, in Case 66, the purchasing manager perceives the supplier as continuously “using false threats and [he] pressured me because we needed to agree on a price and volumes for the following months. The supplier continuously stated that this was the price at which they were selling to other clients and that the in-stock quantity would sell out very soon” (Case 66).

Chess Masters (HSD II)

In the Chess Masters (HSD II) constellation, both parties are highly proficient, and although the supplier is not as powerful, it has high stakes in the negotiation. Unlike the “Short-Cutter” constellation, the sales manager and the purchasing manager seem to embrace the negotiation game, trying to outsmart each other. The purchasing manager might even be impressed by the sales manager's smart bluffs, as illustrated by Case 32: “Bluffing tactics did play a role. The supplier[’s sales manager] built up time pressure but then did not come back to me for several months with their counterproposal. Overall, I found it very impressive how good my counterpart was as a negotiator. He was a good and bad cop in one person at the same time” (Case 32).

“What” Meets “How” (HSD III)

A strong asymmetry characterizes the third HSD constellation in terms of negotiation proficiencies. As the name suggests, this is where the “what” of content meets the “how” of process (HSD III). The purchasing manager in this case is skillful in negotiating but lacks subject-matter proficiency, which makes the purchasing manager uncomfortable—especially when facing a counterpart who seems less proficient in the negotiation process. This discomfort is warranted. To illustrate, Interviewee 20 points to an inability to verify the supplier's statements because of his own lack of subject-matter proficiency: “Concerning the product that we wanted to launch, the supplier knew the product and related implementation processes very well, while I did not. For this reason, I believe that she was in an advantageous position on this matter because I could not easily assess what a ‘fair’ or ‘break-even’ price would be” (Case 20). However, facing a subject-matter expert on the other side of the table—one who lacks negotiation process expertise—gives the purchasing manager an experience of unsophisticated and deceptive process moves from the supplier. For example, suppliers' promises or statements were interpreted as overselling, and false threats were interpreted as naïve bluffs: “They reacted in a quite unprofessional way, making us understand that they could also threaten our existing portfolio—for instance, by stopping deliveries immediately” (Case 20).

TABLE 5 Configuration table for outcomes of high supplier deception (HSD) and low supplier deception (LSD).

Solutions Configuration	Outcome: High supplier deception (HSD)						Outcome: Low supplier deception (LSD)			
	HSD I: The Short-Cutter		HSD II: Chess Masters	HSD III: "What" Meets "How"	HSD IV: The Outfoxed Purchasing Manager	HSD V: David Meets Goliath	HSD VI: The Amateurs	LSD I: The Swamped Sales Manager		LSD II: Relaxed Experts
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	Ia	Ib	II	II
Firm level: Negotiation setup										
Buying firm dominance	⊗	⊗			•	•	•	•	⊗	•
Supplier dominance	•		⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗
Stake, buying firm	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	⊗	⊗	⊗
Stake, supplier		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	⊗
Individual level: Negotiators' resources										
Process proficiency, purchasing manager	•	•	•	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	•	⊗	•
Subject-matter proficiency, purchasing manager	•	•	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	⊗	•	•	•
Process proficiency, sales manager		•	⊗	•	•	•	⊗	•	•	•
Subject-matter proficiency, sales manager	•	•	•	•	•	•	⊗	⊗	⊗	•
Consistency	0.948	0.912	0.909	0.920	0.953	0.901	1.000	0.910	1.000	1.000
Raw coverage	0.147	0.252	0.163	0.187	0.163	0.073	0.158	0.122	0.182	0.182
Unique coverage	0.058	0.082	0.041	0.041	0.074	0.025	0.073	0.085	0.097	0.097
Overall solution consistency	0.958						0.966			
Overall solution coverage	0.556						0.340			
Cases	5, 9, 32, 63, 65, 66	32, 34, 10, 18	20, 28	26, 37	15, 24, 52, 62	41, 46	21, 54	8, 17	68	

Note: •, core causal condition (present); ⊗, peripheral condition (absent); •, peripheral condition (present); ⊗, peripheral condition (absent); blank spaces indicate that these attributes can be present or absent and hence are irrelevant for this specific path (Arellano et al., 2021; Fiss, 2011; Ragin, 2008).

Propositions

Interestingly, these first three HSD constellations show that a purchasing manager can perceive high degrees of deception from a supplier in largely symmetric and asymmetric proficiency constellations. In constellations that are largely proficiency symmetric, the firm-level factors of supplier dominance and negotiation stakes play a role (HSD I and II); meanwhile, for the proficiency-asymmetric constellation (HSD III), the kind of asymmetry (“what” vs. “how”) seems decisive. These findings lead to our first three propositions, which should be considered jointly:

Proposition 1: *A purchasing manager with a high degree of negotiation process proficiency will likely perceive deception from a less proficient but dominant supplier.*

Proposition 2: *A purchasing manager with a high degree of negotiation process proficiency will likely perceive deception from a highly proficient supplier who has high stakes in the negotiation.*

Proposition 3: *A purchasing manager with a high degree of negotiation process proficiency and a low degree of subject-matter proficiency will likely perceive deception from a supplier who is a subject-matter expert but lacks negotiation process expertise.*

HSD and a purchasing manager with low negotiation process proficiency

The Outfoxed Purchasing Manager (HSD IV)

The Outfoxed Purchasing Manager (HSD IV) is inferior to the supplier in terms of both process and subject-matter proficiency. The purchasing manager is not well versed in negotiating and therefore feels insecure about the process; in addition, the purchasing manager does not have the subject-matter knowledge to excel. The supplier uses and abuses this purchasing manager’s weaknesses. This constellation is well illustrated by Case 37. Our key informant reported: “The reason [for being deceived] was that I am not the expert of [subject-matter area], so it is difficult for me to identify problems. Therefore, there was some information asymmetry” (Case 37). The supplier used this asymmetry to its advantage. Because of the supplier’s high stakes, the purchasing manager furthermore perceived the supplier as putting on the pressure to reach a beneficial agreement. Studies have found that such pressure is linked to the use of

competitive bargaining techniques in business negotiations (Tenbrunsel, 1998).

David Meets Goliath (HSD V)

David Meets Goliath (HSD V) resembles the Outfoxed Purchasing Manager in that the supplier is far more knowledgeable and proficient, both in process and in subject matter. Also here, the purchasing manager’s deficit in negotiation process proficiency seems to motivate the supplier to engage in deception: “He might have been more truthful if I had asked the right questions” (Case 62). However, the key differences in the Outfoxed Purchasing Manager constellation lie on the firm level. The stakes for the supplier are clearly higher than for the buying firm, but the buying firm is the dominant party. “I [the purchasing manager] had more power, [so] the opposing party did not really have the chance not to agree” (Case 52). In this case, the purchasing manager perceived the supplier as pulling various individual-level tricks to improve its negotiation outcome. The purchasing manager assumes that the supplier is using negotiation tactics to find a way out of a rather desperate situation on the firm level.

The Amateurs (HSD VI)

Both negotiation parties in HSD VI (The Amateurs) lack process and subject-matter proficiency. Because both parties’ stakes are rather high, they are eager to make a deal, but both appear unable to fully cope with the situation. Thus, a messy process unfolds, during which both parties bluff because of a lack of better tactics and strategies. Case 46 illustrates this situation nicely: “The negotiation was difficult, and both of us lacked the knowledge, experience, and know-how for such a deal. We got frustrated with the long pre-negotiations. The counterparty surely oversold their know-how, experience, and understanding of our issues and the potential for future collaboration.”

Proposition

The pattern in these three configurations (HSD IV–VI)—in which purchasing managers exhibited low degrees of negotiation process proficiency—is somewhat similar to the patterns where purchasing managers had strong process proficiency (HSD I–III). In addition, in these constellations, a purchasing manager perceives a high degree of deception from a supplier in largely asymmetric constellations of proficiencies (HSD IV and V) and a symmetric constellation (HSD VI). Interestingly, all three configurations are characterized at the firm level by constellations in which suppliers are the weaker party with a high stake and at the individual level by purchasing managers who simply lack process proficiency—and largely also subject-

matter proficiency. This outcome appears to be the case regardless of the sales manager's proficiency (process and subject matter), whether in absolute terms or relative to the purchasing manager. Prior empirical findings show that an actor (deceiver) is motivated to deceive an incompetent target (e.g., Kray et al., 2014). Similarly, our configurational target-centered findings show that a purchasing manager's lack of negotiation proficiency increases the likelihood of the purchasing manager's perceiving deception. Prior research in highly controlled ultimatum games also suggests that if purchasing managers assume themselves to be in a less knowledgeable position, they are more suspicious of supplier deception (Boles et al., 2000). We summarize this insight in the following proposition:

Proposition 4: *A purchasing manager with a low degree of negotiation proficiency (process and subject matter) will likely perceive deception from a power-disadvantaged supplier with high stakes in the negotiation.*

LSD and a purchasing manager with high subject-matter proficiency

The Swamped Supplier (LSD Ia and Ib)

We see striking similarities and differences between the LSD constellations. A common pattern is the co-occurrence of a purchasing manager's high subject-matter expertise, along with low stakes in the negotiation and a power-disadvantaged supplier. Meanwhile, the Swamped Supplier is the *only* constellation involving high stakes for the supplier and simultaneously a lack of subject-matter know-how.

In the Swamped Supplier configuration (LSD 1), the purchasing manager perceives the supplier as both inferior and "overwhelmed" (Case 21). This self-confident purchasing manager is aware of the sales manager's low degree of subject-matter proficiency and also has a self-perception of being "really an expert in this field of service" (Case 17).

A supplier's sales manager who does not have solid subject-matter proficiency is an easy target for such a confident purchasing manager: "I was lucky that the other side was not a good negotiator so that I was able to gain dominance again and again in technical issues" (Case 21). A purchasing manager who perceives a supplier as incapable tends not to perceive the use of deception tactics by the supplier: "I didn't see any particular tactic on the part of [service provider], and they reacted exactly as I expected" (Case 21). Interviewee 17 reports a

similar perception: "No bluffing was used. I expected the process ... just like it unfolded" (Case 17).

Relaxed Experts (LSD II)

In this configuration, the purchasing manager and the sales manager are both knowledgeable and proficient in the subject matter and the process, and neither has high stakes. When the stakes are low, and the purchasing manager is clearly power advantaged, the supplier is not perceived as a threat, and the purchasing manager does not perceive deceptive behavior: "There was no bluffing behavior or threatening or manipulation. I believe it was fair" (Case 68).

Proposition

Comparing the Relaxed Experts (LSD II) and David Meets Goliath (HSD V) reveals an interesting difference between factors leading to perceptions of HSD versus LSD. Low stakes seem decisive for the purchasing manager's perception of LSD (LSD II). In addition, the purchasing manager enjoys a sense of self-protection or invulnerability by being proficient. This capability is lacking in HSD V. Thus, low stakes for the supplier and relatively higher proficiency levels for the purchasing manager lead the purchasing manager to perceive LSD. We conclude with the following proposition:

Proposition 5: *A purchasing manager with a high degree of subject-matter proficiency and low stakes in a negotiation will likely perceive little deception from a power-disadvantaged supplier.*

Summary

To summarize, our findings suggest that perceived supplier deception is indeed a causally complex SCM phenomenon. Correlational findings aim to show that more/less of a factor X (e.g., more power) leads to more/less Y (e.g., perceived deception), whereas our configurational findings show that combinations of factors on both the firm and individual levels together lead to a purchasing manager's perception of high or low degrees of deception. Notably, we find that the path of deception is wide, with six "causal recipes" (Ragin, 2008) equally able to lead the purchasing manager to perceive supplier deception. Meanwhile, the path of its absence is narrow, with just two such "recipes." In addition to the summarizing propositions, we present a summary of our configurational findings and how they relate to extant correlational findings in Table 6.

TABLE 6 Summary of the configurational findings on perceived supplier deception and their relation to prior correlational findings.

Factor	Prior correlational findings	Our configurational findings
Power	<p>Target perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buying firms perceive <i>less supplier opportunism</i> if the buying firm is bigger (Villena & Craighead, 2017). Buying firms (i.e., retailers) perceive <i>more supplier opportunism</i> if the <i>supplier is more powerful</i> (Morgan et al., 2007). <p>Actor perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>More powerful actor</i> uses <i>more deception</i> (Gelderman et al., 2020; Malhotra & Gino, 2011; Olekalns et al., 2014; Pitesa & Thau, 2013). <i>Less powerful actors</i> use <i>more deception</i> (Gelderman et al., 2020; Koning et al., 2011; Olekalns & Smith, 2007; Steinel & de Dreu, 2004). 	<p>Target perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on the constellation with other factors, purchasing managers perceive deception from both powerful <i>and</i> power-disadvantaged suppliers. Purchasing managers perceive deception from more <i>powerful</i> suppliers if they face a less negotiation-proficient sales manager. Purchasing managers perceive deception from <i>power-disadvantaged</i> suppliers when the stakes for the supplier are high and the purchasing manager's proficiency is low. Purchasing managers do not perceive supplier deception if faced with a <i>power-disadvantaged</i> supplier if the purchasing manager is a subject-matter expert and has low stakes. Only in constellations where the buying firm is <i>more powerful</i> than the supplier or <i>equally powerful</i> does the purchasing manager perceive no supplier deception. <p>→ Negotiator proficiencies and stakes must be taken into account.</p>
Stake	<p>Target perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals assume that a counterparty uses <i>more deception</i> if the counterpart has <i>higher stakes</i> (Tenbrunsel, 1998). <p>Actor perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actors with <i>higher stakes</i> use <i>more deception</i> (e.g., Aquino et al., 2009; Boles et al., 2000; Carter, 2000; Tenbrunsel, 1998; Volkema & Fleury, 2002). Actors with <i>higher stakes</i> use <i>less deception</i> if their moral self-identity is activated (Aquino et al., 2009). 	<p>Target perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on the constellation with other factors, purchasing managers perceive deception from <i>both</i> suppliers with high and low stakes. Purchasing managers perceive <i>high levels of supplier deception</i> if the supplier has <i>high stakes</i> in the negotiation ... and both negotiators (purchasing and sales manager) have a high process proficiency. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ... and a purchasing manager with low proficiency levels interacts with a dominant supplier. A purchasing manager with <i>low stakes</i> perceives <i>low levels of supplier deception</i>, but only when combined with high degrees of subject-matter expertise and a lack of power on the supplier side. <p>→ Mainly negotiator proficiencies but also the power balance must be taken into account.</p>
Proficiency	<p>Target perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals with <i>low proficiency</i> levels perceive <i>high supplier deception</i> (e.g., Boles et al., 2000). <p>Actor perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actors deceive <i>targets they perceive as less proficient</i> than themselves (Barasch et al., 2016; Kray et al., 2014). Actors <i>deceive targets that are more proficient</i> than themselves (SimanTov-Nachlieli et al., 2020). Actors deceive start-ups more often because they perceive start-up employees as less proficient and experienced (Rottenburger & Kaufmann, 2020). 	<p>Target perspective:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Depending on the interplay with other factors, symmetric <i>and</i> asymmetric proficiency constellations lead to perceived supplier deception. High purchasing managers' proficiencies and low sales managers' proficiencies lead to perceived supplier deception in combination with a powerful supplier. A purchasing manager with high process but low subject-matter expertise and who is facing a sales manager with low process but high subject-matter expertise perceives supplier deception. Purchasing managers perceive supplier deception if both parties are highly proficient and the stakes are high for the supplier. Purchasing managers perceive supplier deception if they lack proficiency and face a power-disadvantaged supplier with high stakes.

(Continues)

TABLE 6 (Continued)

Factor	Prior correlational findings	Our configurational findings
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Purchasing managers perceive low levels of supplier deception if they are subject-matter experts, have low stakes in the negotiation, and face a power-disadvantaged counterpart. → The power balance and the stakes for both sides must be taken into account.
Summary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> None of the factors alone can explain what leads purchasing managers to perceive high versus low levels of supplier deception. → Conjunction Different combinations lead to the same outcome. → Equifinality There are more combinations leading to high degrees of perceived supplier deception and only few that lead to low degrees, and the latter are not the reverse of the former. → Asymmetry 	

THEORETICAL AND MANAGERIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

With our research approach, we build on recent efforts in the SCM literature to advance our understanding of buyer–supplier negotiations (Kaufmann et al., 2018; Thomas et al., 2021). Specifically, we make two key contributions: (1) We change the perspective of deceptive negotiation behavior research from the deception source to the deception target; and (2) we find the perception of deception to be causally complex, calling for a configurational approach that leads us to identify six distinct paths to high perceived supplier deception and two distinct paths to low perceived supplier deception.

Changing the perspective: From the deception source toward the deception target

Our study contributes to SCM and negotiation research by following recent calls to shift the focus of transgression research away from the predator and toward the target’s perspective (e.g., Lumineau & Oliveira, 2020). The prevalent focus on the actor belies the importance of the target’s perception. A purchasing manager’s perception of deceptive negotiation behavior influences the purchasing manager’s subsequent actions, with potentially detrimental effects on the overall supply chain, including lost trust or even relationship termination (Carter & Kaufmann, 2007; Kaufmann et al., 2018). Only if the purchasing manager perceives supplier deception do these detrimental effects manifest (Hill et al., 2009). The following quote nicely illustrates potential consequences of perceived supplier deception: “We were ... not willing to work with a supplier [that] we perceived as ... blackmailing [us]” (Case 26).

By changing the perspective and focusing on the target of deception (i.e., in our case, the purchasing manager), this research makes a critical step toward integrating the target’s perspective into deception research in general and specifically into negotiation research in supply chains. Analogously, as in criminology, understanding the motives and actions of actors continues to be important, but the picture is incomplete if we do not research the constellations of factors that lead targets to become victims and the consequences for these victims.

At a high level, our results suggest that a purchasing manager’s perception of supplier deception is not driven by one factor alone. Instead, it is necessary to consider the complex interplay of structural firm-level factors and individual-level factors. By considering these factors jointly and integrating the target’s perspective, researchers and managers can understand when deception’s detrimental consequences unfold in buyer–supplier interactions.

In supporting the need to account for the target’s perspective, our study aligns with recent work in the SCM discipline on perceived opportunism (e.g., Skowronski et al., 2020; Villena & Craighead, 2017). Our work investigates one distinct manifestation of perceived opportunism: deceptive negotiation behavior. Such behavior has not been the focus of past research efforts, despite its being omnipresent in buyer–supplier negotiations. We also go beyond recent studies on perceived opportunism that focus either on firm-level factors (e.g., Villena & Craighead, 2017) or on individual-level factors (e.g., Arıkan, 2020). More specifically, we combine the meso- and micro-levels of analysis by combining two structural factors on the firm level and two negotiators’ proficiencies on the individual level. In doing so, we synthesize previously separate ideas and reconcile mixed findings of earlier studies on deception. For example, our

findings indicate that a high and low negotiator's proficiency level and high and low structural firm-level dominance can influence the perception of deception. Past work conducted using a correlational approach has suggested that a knowledge-disadvantaged purchasing manager is prone to perceiving deception (Boles et al., 2000). However, our configurational view shows that, depending on the interplay with other factors, symmetric and asymmetric proficiency constellations lead to perceived supplier deception.

Changing the theoretical lens: Configurational theorizing to unpack deception's causal complexity

Adopting a configurational theorizing approach allowed us to assess the phenomenon of deceptive supplier behavior more holistically. In doing so, we complement the dominant correlational perspective, in which the focus is on the net effects of factors, rather than on the interplay of multiple factors (Furnari et al., 2021; Ketchen et al., 2022).

Our configurational analysis in Study 3 demonstrates that a purchasing manager's perception of deceptive supplier behavior in a negotiation is causally complex. We find that dominance and stakes on the firm level and perceived proficiencies of the negotiators on the individual level combine in distinct ways that lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception (i.e., conjunction). Further, we find that more than one combination of these factors leads to a purchasing manager's perceiving supplier deception (i.e., equifinality) and that the perception of deception is asymmetric—that is, the complexity arises because even when factors combine to lead to supplier deception, their absence does not automatically lead to low degrees of perceived deception.

Notably, we find that the path of deception is wide, with six “causal recipes” (Ragin, 2008) equally able to influence the purchasing manager's perception of HSD. Meanwhile, the path of its absence is narrow, with just two such recipes. Interestingly, Mellewigt et al. (2018) find in their configurational study that the path to general opportunism is narrow. They conclude “that it is easier to avoid high opportunism than to consistently achieve low opportunism” (Mellewigt et al., 2018, p. 1208). We complement these findings by showing that switching the perspective to the target and focusing on deception as one form of opportunism uncover considerably more combinations of firm-level factors and individual-level factors for HSD than for LSD.

Managerial implications

Our research findings yield several valuable insights for practitioners. Although they are especially salient for purchasing managers, B2B sales professionals also should pay particular attention to negotiation constellations that might lead their counterparts to perceive them as deceptive. Considering the potentially detrimental effects of deception—that deceptive negotiation behavior engenders low levels of trust that can threaten the future benefits, opportunities, and effectiveness of the buyer–supplier collaboration—our results suggest that sensitivity to different constellations of factors that lead purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception is warranted.

Uncovering six paths to HSD and two paths to LSD suggests that B2B negotiators are well advised to develop and sustain a holistic view of their negotiations and thus increase their chances of detecting deception. Negotiators' likelihood of detecting deception accurately is only slightly higher than chance (Bond & DePaulo, 2006), particularly when facing a professional negotiator as a counterpart (DePaulo & DePaulo, 1989). We therefore recommend that purchasing managers focus on different combinations of power, stake, and proficiencies—instead of on isolated factors—in their efforts to detect supplier deception.

Our results are also relevant for purchasing leadership teams. We recommend that leaders have their purchasing managers regularly engage in negotiation training sessions in which deception detection is an essential element. Deception detection training has been shown to increase detection accuracy in non-B2B negotiation contexts (Driskell, 2012). Importantly, as suggested by prior research, these training sessions should go beyond isolated verbal and non-verbal cues to focus on contextual factors (Levine, 2018). Given the evidence for the causally complex nature of deception, leaders should emphasize that deception cues must be considered in combination instead of in isolation. Particularly, our findings highlight that a combination of factors on the firm level and the individual level is relevant (i.e., stakes, power balance, subject-matter proficiency, and negotiation process proficiency). Because our findings based on fsQCA score low on generalizability, we advise companies to document and profile their negotiations and systematically analyze patterns of deception to improve subsequent training sessions over time.

B2B sales professionals need to be aware that purchasing managers may perceive their negotiation behavior as deceptive when they have, in fact, been deceptive—and also when they have not. Consequently, B2B sales professionals should carefully gauge which behaviors their counterparts find acceptable and which

ones are unacceptable; they might need to proactively approach their purchasing counterparts to ensure that there is no misconception between the intended behavior and how their counterpart perceives it.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

In this section, we acknowledge the limitations of our research while pointing to future research possibilities that these limitations open up. One set of limitations arises from our research design and the sample selections for Studies 1 and 3. For both, we conducted interviews to collect qualitative data on real-life negotiations. Although this approach is a first step in departing from highly controlled lab settings, our method required that we collect data retrospectively. Deception incidents are critical, and thus, “subjects usually have good recall” (Chell, 2004, p. 47) of the negotiations. Nevertheless, studying deception in negotiations using an ethnographic approach would be a worthwhile next step, recognizing that it would require similar care because of the potential influence of social desirability (Llewellyn & Whittle, 2019; Lumineau & Oliveira, 2020).

The rich, vivid insights that we accessed from our interviewees’ perspectives (Gioia et al., 2013; Graebner et al., 2012) are bound to the buyer–supplier contexts from which they were drawn (Graebner et al., 2012). Power balance, negotiation stakes, and negotiator proficiencies are dimensions relevant to other negotiation contexts, including competitor–competitor alliance relationships, purchasing–engineering intra-firm settings, and firm–NGO settings. We expect our findings to apply in these settings as well and therefore encourage research on perceived deception in settings beyond buyer–supplier negotiations.

Because we cannot control external factors that influence this buyer–supplier setting (Eckerd et al., 2021), we encourage further elaboration and testing of our findings using research designs that are high in internal and external validity. For example, future research might involve scenario-based vignette experiments or laboratory experiments.

Our unit of analysis is a purchasing manager’s perspective of a buyer–supplier negotiation where the purchasing manager perceived supplier deception. Thus, focusing only on purchasing managers as interviewees for Study 3 of our research appears appropriate and suitable to generate the insights we sought. Nevertheless, we encourage collecting data from both sides of the dyad for a more complete view of the focal phenomenon. Purchasing managers are not the only

targets of supplier deception, of course. Sales managers also are targets of deception from the buying firm, so further research that acknowledges and seeks the sales manager’s perspective is warranted. Moreover, our focus on the purchasing manager’s perspective does not provide insights into purchasing managers’ deception detection accuracy and when deception is wrongly perceived. Thus, another intriguing path forward to expand this study would be to investigate the differences between perceived deception and actual deception in buyer–supplier negotiations.

Using fsQCA limits the number of causal conditions that can be included in a study (Marx, 2010; Marx & Duşa, 2011). Thus, although we thoroughly reviewed the extant literature, rigorously analyzed potential causal conditions (Study 1), and then prioritized and selected the causal conditions (Study 2) to be included in the fsQCA (Study 3), we cannot rule out that other plausible causal conditions might also prompt purchasing managers to perceive supplier deception. For example, demographic factors (e.g., gender, race, and age), cultural differences (e.g., on the national, industry, firm, or functional levels), and personality traits might be important factors to consider. Note also that we were unable to include personality traits of the sales managers. Beginning with Jones and Kavanagh (1996), numerous scholars have examined different personality traits in relation to deception, including the dark triad and Machiavellianism. We therefore encourage further research on how these character traits combine with other explanatory factors, like the ones we studied here. Moreover, research has started to consider factors such as the emotional intelligence of deceivers and the cognitive load required for deception. Thus, including the cognitive abilities of negotiators is another avenue worth exploring (Gaspar et al., 2022; Van’t Veer et al., 2014).

We limited our research efforts to self-interested deception. Thus, our conceptualization does not include, for example, white lies. To advance SCM research, further research should integrate different conceptualizations of deceptive negotiation behaviors in one framework. Kaufmann et al.’s (2018) differentiation of bluffs and lies might serve as a stepping-stone that could be integrated with other diverse conceptualizations in the extant literature to further refine the operationalization of the deception construct in buyer–supplier negotiations.

Finally, past research has shown that individuals have different assessments of what forms of deceptive negotiation behaviors are acceptable (e.g., Fulmer et al., 2009; Kaufmann et al., 2018; Lewicki & Robinson, 1998). One option for extending our research is to consider what combinations of factors on the firm

and individual levels interact to lead to such normative, ethical assessments of deceptive negotiation behaviors.

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