

The Influence of Sales Training and Sales Experience through Adaptive Selling Behavior on Salesperson Performance

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Abstract

The competitive conditions in heavy equipment sales are very dynamic, and assessing the sales force's performance is an essential factor in guiding managerial decisions to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the sales organization. Sales training must be provided consistently to all salespeople to enhance their competence. Experienced salespeople also play an important position in the business in contributing value to customers and company productivity. This study examines the effect of sales training and sales experience on salesperson performance through adaptive selling behavior. This quantitative research uses primary data; Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) PLS was used to analyze the data obtained from ABC Company. Researchers obtained 96 respondent data based on predetermined criteria, which were analyzed using SmartPLS software. The results showed that the seven hypotheses tested were accepted. Based on the findings of this study that sales training, sales experience, and adaptive selling behavior directly affect salesperson performance; sales training and sales experience directly affect adaptive selling behavior; adaptive selling behavior can also mediate sales training and sales experience affects salesperson performance. This study also shows that sales experience is the most influential variable on adaptive selling behavior, so the management of ABC Company also needs to make strategies and competency acceleration programs that can accelerate sales experience.

Keywords

sales training; sales experience; adaptive selling behavior; salesperson performance



I. Introduction

Today's firms confront several obstacles, and training their sales team is a top priority for the majority of them. Firms' increased interest in human capital and organizational expertise demonstrates that these are the two key sources of a company's sustainable competitive advantage (A. S. Singh, 2017). Organizations today face many challenges, and training their salespeople is at the top of the organization's agenda. According to the voice of management (Sales Division Head) ABC Company, sales training must be provided consistently to all salespeople to maintain and improve their competence because the situation and conditions of competition in the heavy equipment sales sector are very dynamic. Sales training has often been carried out related to behavior competency, business management competency, and technical operation competency. However, the impact of sales training is currently still a question mark to what extent the influence of sales training on sales performance.

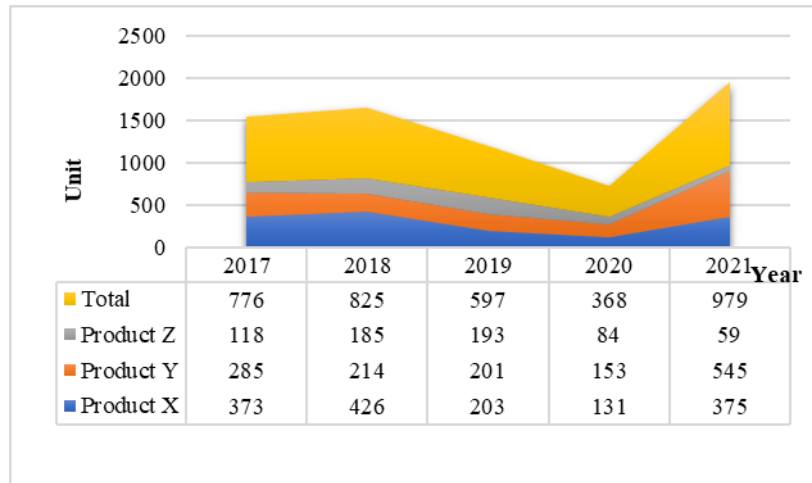


Figure 1. Data of Sales Achievement of ABC Company (in unit)

Sales of heavy equipment in Indonesia are getting tighter, which impacts achieving the company's sales targets. Based on figure 1.1, the problem is the fluctuation of sales achievement of each salesperson from 2017 to 2021 in ABC Company. For example, sales in 2020 for three brands experienced a drastic decrease of 38.35% compared to 2019. Meanwhile, sales in 2021 for three brands experienced a drastic increase of 62.4% compared to 2020.

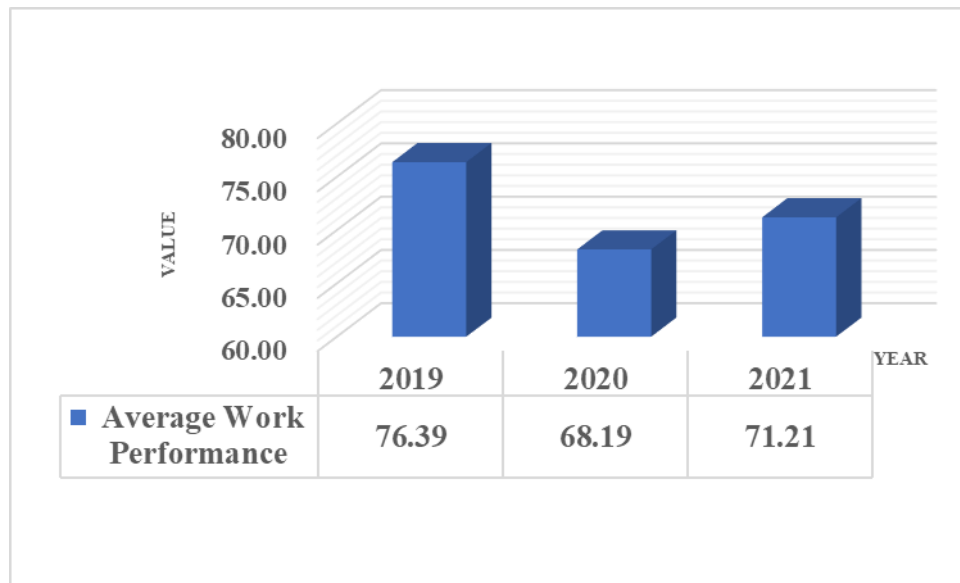


Figure 2. The Average Value of Work Performance of a Salesperson

Based on figure 1.2, the average value of work performance of a salesperson in 2020 also decreased by 10.73% compared to 2019. While the average value of a salesperson's work performance in 2021 increased by 4.43% compared to 2020. Sales in 2020 experienced a drastic decline due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused customer investment plans to be postponed or even canceled. Sales in 2021 have experienced a drastic increase because the conditions and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic have begun to be controlled, thus providing opportunities for economic recovery in Indonesia. Steps for economic recovery began with the relaxation of general activities.

Sales training is a type of training that focuses on developing trainees' abilities and skills as salespeople, including distributing the company's products and services to customers, increasing their ability to adapt to changing market conditions, and developing positive relationships with customers (Hanasta Toar Wibawa, Edy Rahardja, 2017). The quality of sales training has an effect on salesperson performance (Chung et al., 2021). Sales training is a systematic way to developing an individual's knowledge, abilities, and attitudes with the goal of increasing sales effectiveness. Sales training is one of the factors that directly affect a salesperson's effectiveness (Wahyuningsih, 2019).

Sales experience refers to a salesperson's level of expertise in selling products/services. Sales experience includes involvement in the sales process, delivery of sales presentations, and failure to close a contract. Sales performance is determined by a salesperson's experience, sales training, and ability to build a business network (Purwantini et al., 2020).

Adaptive selling behavior is the modification of a seller's selling methods, tactics, social style, communication of verbal, and appearance of physical (Wisker & Poulis, 2014). Adaptive selling behavior is characterized as a shift in a salesperson's individual behavior throughout a product sale. The effectiveness of personal selling is becoming increasingly dependent on the ability of salespeople to adapt quickly, effectively, and consistently to changing sales circumstances.

Salesperson performance is one of the key determinants in the company's success (Aqmala & Ardyan, 2019). The definition of salesperson performance is an evaluation of the salesperson's efforts and outcomes obtained in accordance with the company's objectives. Sales target accomplishment demonstrates how his sales performance is constantly improving depending on his present and previous sales results (Zakaria et al., 2018). The performance of a salesperson involves meeting overall sales targets, contributing to market share growth, and growing the number of customers (Asyhari & Yuwalliatin, 2020). Customer satisfaction may also be a factor in determining a salesperson's effectiveness. If customers are satisfied, they are more likely to purchase the product again and tell other people about it (Haeruddin, 2020). According to Priansa in Nusjirwan (2020) "Implementation of communication activities to customers within the company is carried out formally, however, currently there are also companies that practice their communication activities to consumers in an informed manner so that they can explore in-depth information from customers". Regarding the background, this research considers the customer value as an important element for an industry, both in service and manufacture. Moreover, the maximum customer value can be made only if positive influence of marketing and individual environment association does exist (Kusumadewi, 2019). The quality of products that are in great demand by consumers can be seen from several factors including packaging, price, quality, and benefits obtained by consumers (Romdonny, 2019).

By determining customer satisfaction, companies can determine how well they are functioning, how to improve their performance, and how to preserve good relationships with customers (Raassens & Haans, 2017).

1.1 Research Problem and Research Gaps

Based on the discussion of the previous problem above, the research problem is that the declining performance of salespeople at ABC Company is suspected to be caused by the quality of training, sales experience, and adaptability of salespeople. Therefore, it is necessary to analyze the effect of these variables on the salespeople's performance of ABC Company. Furthermore, these inputs are indispensable for improving salespeople's development strategies and programs.

A salesperson with more skill and experience will be considerably more productive in their sales efforts. The quality of sales training has an effect on salesperson performance

(Chung et al., 2021). The salesperson's performance is determined by how clever works are learnt and applied by the salesman in order to successfully and efficiently utilize their resources. There is a relationship between sales training and sales performance (Zepf A et al., 2016), but other studies did not find a direct relationship between sales training and salesperson performance. Experience of sales has an effect on a salesman's performance (Hanasta Toar Wibawa, Edy Rahardja, 2017). Adaptive selling behavior is a learning process that enables a salesperson to swiftly identify customer expectations and change to meet those needs. While experienced salespeople can do adaptive selling more effectively, which can have an effect on sales success (R.M et al., 2019), other study indicates that adaptive selling has no effect on sales performance (Zakaria et al., 2018).

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To analyze the influence of sales training on adaptive selling behavior.
2. To analyze the influence of sales experience on adaptive selling behavior.
3. To analyze the influence of sales training on salesperson performance.
4. To analyze the influence of sales experience on salesperson performance.
5. To analyze the influence of adaptive selling behavior on salesperson performance.
6. To analyze the influence of sales training through adaptive selling behavior on salesperson performance.
7. To analyze the influence of sales experience through adaptive selling behavior on salesperson performance.

II. Research Method

2.1 Unit Analysis

Researchers will observe heavy equipment salesperson/business consultant in all branches of ABC Company (20 branches) and test convincingly the relationship between sales training and sales experience on salesperson performance through adaptive selling behavior to provide strategic recommendations for ABC Company in determining salesperson development program based on this research results.

2.2 Sampling Design

a. Population & Sample Size

The sample of this research is a population of 96 employees who sell heavy equipment in 20 branches of ABC Company throughout Indonesia.

b. Sampling Method

This research used non-probability sampling, sometimes known as purposive sampling. Sometimes it may become important to gather information from specified target groups, as opposed to those that are most easily or conveniently accessible. Here, the sample is limited to particular sorts of persons who can supply the needed information, either because they are the only ones with it or because they meet certain criteria established by the researcher.

2.3. Location & Time Frame of Study

This research will be carried out in Head Office and Branch of ABC Company. This research has been conducted from June to August 2022.

2.4 Research Model

Based on the literature review and hypotheses development, the author developed the research model, which can be seen in figure 3 below:

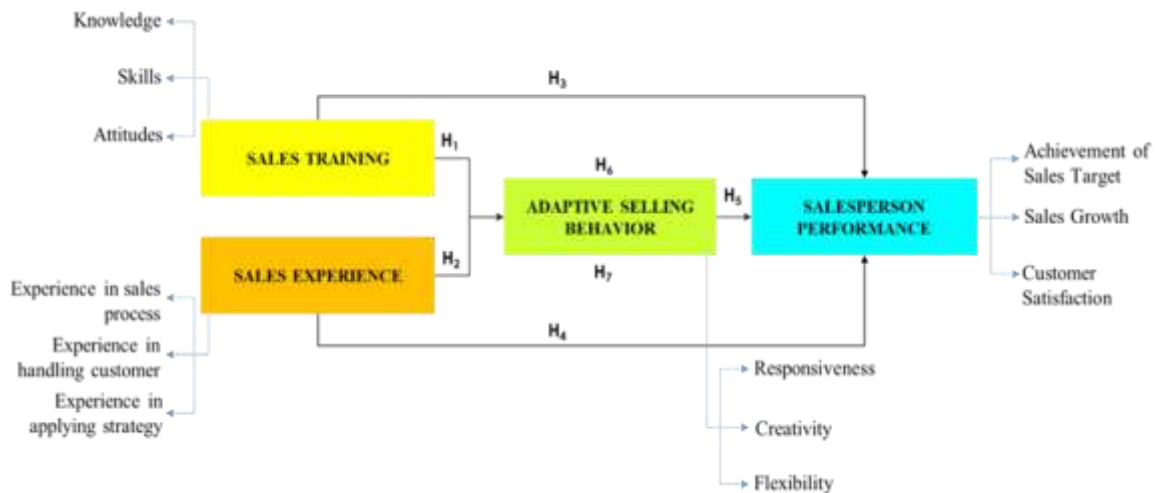


Figure 3. Research Model

III. Discussion

3.1 Results

a. Demographic of Survey Respondent

Figure 4 depicts the demographic characteristics of the respondents in this study, such as the respondent gender, age, education level, job position, years of service, and work location. Based on the data collected from the survey, 100% of the respondents were male. The age group of respondents is dominated by the age group of 26-35 years (83%), followed by the age group 25 years (6%), the age group 36-45 years (6%), and the age group 46-55 years (4%). The majority of respondents hold bachelor's degrees (92%), followed by respondents with master's degrees (7%) and diplomas (1%). All respondents have a job position as a business consultant (salesperson). Respondents are dominated by employees who have worked in the company for 6-10 years (50%) and 5 years (33%), followed by respondents with 11-15 years of service (9%), 16-20 years (5%), and > 25 years (2%). Based on work location, the majority of respondents are in Java (42%), followed by Sumatra (22%), Kalimantan (19%), Sulawesi (14%), and Papua (4%). Respondents from Sumatra included people who worked in Medan, Bengkulu, Palembang, Lampung, Jambi, Padang and Pekanbaru. Respondents from Java included people who worked in Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang, and Surabaya. Respondents from Kalimantan included people who worked in Samarinda, Balikpapan, Banjarmasin, Tarakan, Sampit, and Pontianak. Respondents from Sulawesi included people who worked in Ujung Pandang, Kendari, Manado, and Palu. Respondents from Papua included people who worked in Sorong and Jayapura.

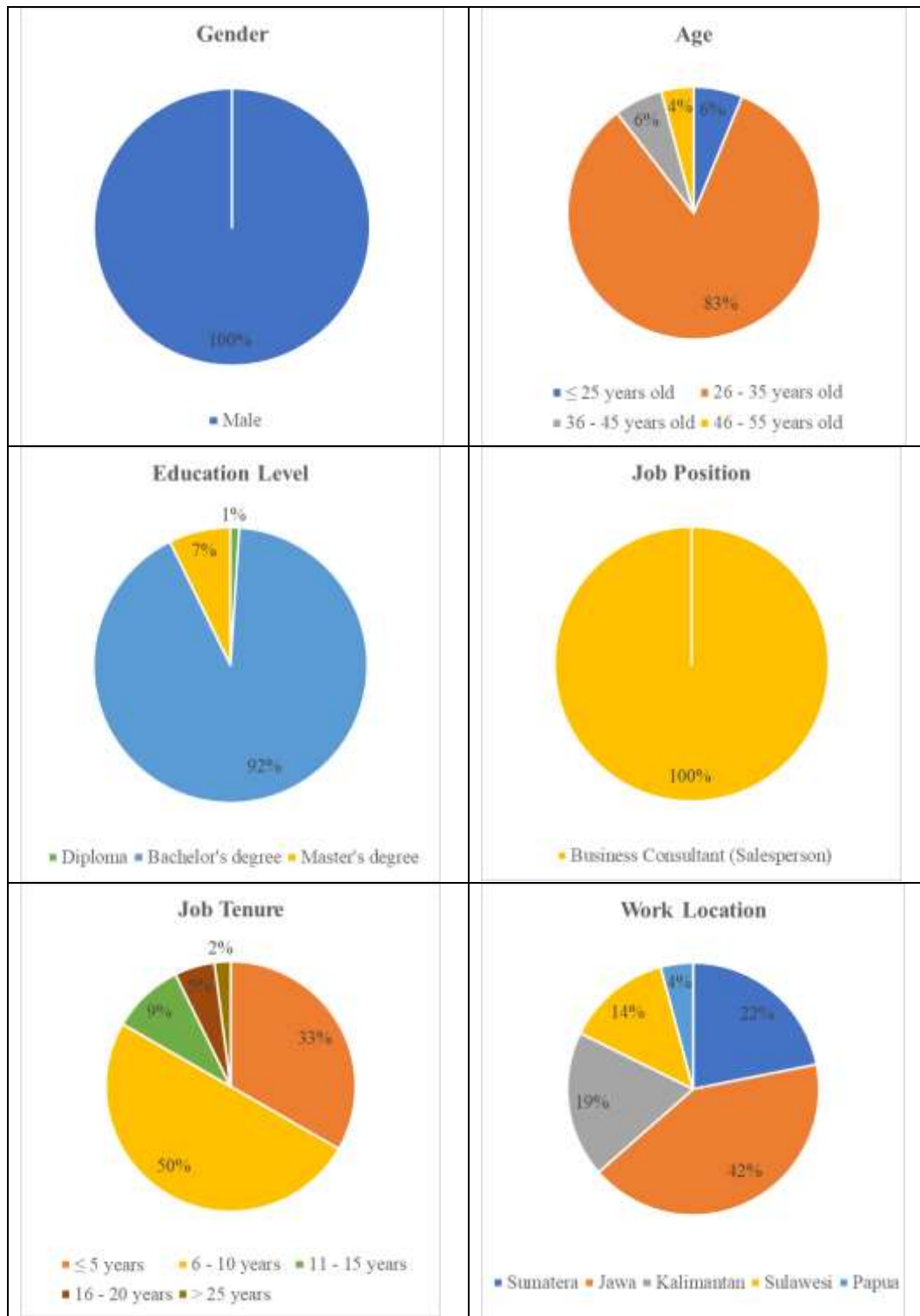


Figure 4. Respondent's Demographic Data

3.2 Structural Equation Modelling Analysis

In the main-test stage, the researcher again tested the normality, validity and reliability of the measurement model used in this study (Cepeda-Carrion et al., 2019). Tests will be conducted on internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Normality test results will determine method to be used in research this. Using the results of a normality test, it is known that the value Sig. on the Kolmogorov -Smirnov test showing score at each indicator is lacking from alpha 5% (0.05) so that could interpret that the data is not

distributed normal. So that the method to be used in this study is approach non- parametric statistics PLS SEM with application using the SmartPLS 3 software.

a. Convergent Validity (Outer Model)

Validity convergent considered worthy if AVE value ≥ 0.5 . There is no overall problem with the AVE value of each dimension where the results of the validity test show that each research indicator has a loading factor > 0.5 and AVE > 0.5 . Consequently, no indicators were eliminated from the research model.

b. Reliability Test Results

The reliability assessment can be seen from the *composite reliability* value which has a value greater than 0.7 and *Cronbach's alpha* value is greater than 0.6. Based on reliability test, it can be seen that all *composite reliability* values have a value of more than 0.8 and *Cronbach's alpha* is more than 0.7. Thus, all variables in this study were declared reliable.

c. Discriminant Validity

Analysis of discriminant validity was conducted to see how far a construct differs from another construct (Henseler et al., 2015).

d. Analysis Fornell-Larcker

Discriminant validity by evaluating the Fornell-Larcker criteria to ensure that the construct is valid provided that the construct shares more variance with its own construct, not with other constructs. Evaluation is done by looking at the square root AVE in each construct that must be larger than the AVE in other constructs. According to the *Fornell-Larcker* test, the square root AVE value of each dimension has the largest value in each construct. It can be concluded that there is no problem with the Fornell-Larcker criteria.

e. Analysis Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) is evaluation to level correlation Among two measured constructs by perfect. If the HTMT value is between two construct close to 1, then the smaller *discriminant validity* on the model. At least need confirmed that more HTMT value small of 1. The HTMT value for each correlation between construct is below 1, so the research model has level good validity.

f. Structural Modelling Analysis

After to do measurement model testing reflective, stage next is to do testing to the structural model. As for testing to the structural model consist from collinearity, measurement of R-Square, F-Square, and testing connection causal (AKOSSOU, 2013)

g. Collinearity

Analysis against collinearity is done for ensure no there is intercorrelation or collinearity between variables (Kock, 2015). Collinearity is existence two or more same indicator is at in one block indicator. A model exhibits collinearity if have the value of the Inner Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) < 0.2 or > 5 . According to the collinearity test, value from every construct reflects that there is no collinearity in the model.

h. R² (R square)

The value of R² (*R square*) is used to test the influence of independent variables on dependent variables. According to the test that Adaptive Selling Behavior may be described by the independent variable Sales training and Sales Experience by 62.3%, while Salesperson

Performance could be explained by independent variable Sales Training, Sales Experience and Adaptive Selling Behavior by 56.5%.

i. F²Test (F square)

Analysis F² used to determine whether the influence of independent variables on dependent variables is significant if there is a change (eg independent variables are removed). If F² > 0.02 it means that the effect is weak; F² > 0.15 means moderate effect; and F² > 0.35 means structural influence. Based on F² test, Sales experience is the most influential variable to adaptive selling. With highest value of F square that is 0.622.

j. Hypotheses Testing Results

1. Analysis Connection Causal (inner model)

Researcher use *two-tailed test* with a significance level of 5%. Hypothesis will receive if *t-value* above 1.96 or below - 1.96. Test conducted use technique *bootstrapping* with 5000 subsamples (Hair et al., 2014).

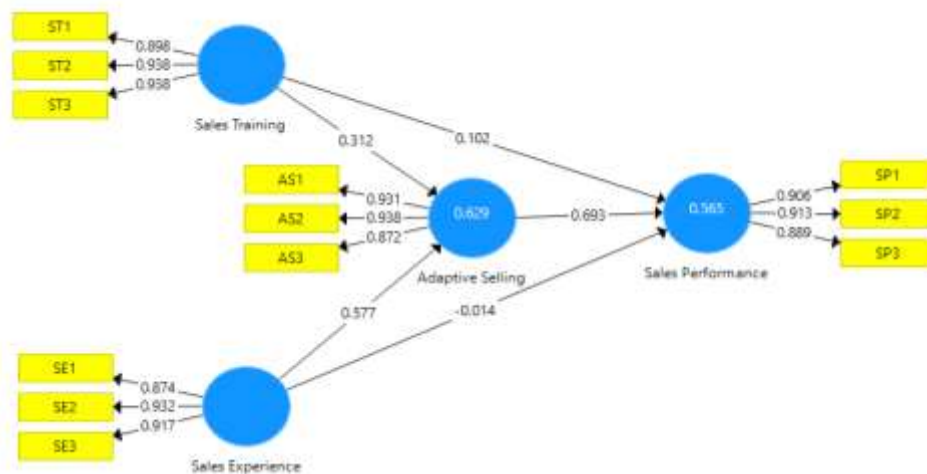


Figure 5. Structural Model

2. Direct Effect Test

Table 1. Direct Effect Test Results

Direct Effect	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Sales Training → Adaptive Selling Behavior (H ₁)	3.857	0.000	Significant
Sales Experience → Adaptive Selling Behavior (H ₂)	6.407	0.000	Significant
Sales Training → Sales Performance (H ₃)	1.076	0.283	Not significant
Sales Experience → Sales Performance (H ₄)	0.117	0.907	Not significant
Adaptive Selling Behavior → Sales Performance (H ₅)	4.918	0.000	Significant

Source: Processed Data (2022)

Evaluation of the path coefficient structural model can be seen from the results of each. The relationship between variables can be declared significant if the *t-statistics value is* > 1.96 and the *p-value is* <0.05.

3. Indirect Effect Test

Table 2. Indirect Effect Test Results

Indirect Effect	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Sales Training → Adaptive Selling Behavior → Sales Performance (H ₆)	2.770	0.006	Significant
Sales Experience → Adaptive Selling Behavior → Sales Performance (H ₇)	3.893	0.000	Significant

Based on the table 2 above, it found that the variable Adaptive Selling Behavior mediates the influence between sales training and sales experience variables on salesperson performance, so it can be stated that hypothesis 6 (H₆) and hypothesis 7 (H₇) are accepted.

3.2 Discussion

a. Sales Training and Adaptive Selling Behavior

The first hypothesis shows that sales training has a significant effect on adaptive selling behavior. According to the result of this study, this hypothesis 1 (H₁) is supported with a value of t-statistics 2.506 which is bigger than 1.96, and a p-value of 0.013 which is smaller than 0.05 then it can be stated that H₁ is accepted.

This hypothesis is confirmed by prior studies indicating that sales training might influence salespeople's ability to make adaptive sales (Pelham & Kravitz, 2008). Sales training may enhance the capacity of salespeople to produce and deliver presentations more efficiently and to provide positive feedback to clients with more agility. Sales training essentially strives to continually enhance the talents and skills of salespeople, such as distributing goods and services following customer wants, enhancing flexibility to market circumstances, and fostering positive customer relationships (Hanasta Toar Wibawa, Edy Rahardja, 2017). Sales training is essential for strengthening salespeople's capacity to comprehend their sales environment (Aqmala & Ardyan, 2019).

b. Sales Experience and Adaptive Selling Behavior

The second hypothesis shows that sales experience has a significant effect on adaptive selling behavior. According to the result of this study, this hypothesis 2 (H₂) is supported with a value of t-statistics 7.400 which is bigger than 1.96, and a p-value of 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05 then it can be stated that H₂ is accepted.

This hypothesis is confirmed by prior studies indicating that sales experience has significant effect on adaptive selling (R.M et al., 2019; Zakaria et al., 2018). Good sales experience may be attributed to a salesman who can adapt his sales to the present environment. Effectively managing time and conducting sales operations is essential for acquiring consumers. Adaptive selling involves negotiating and managing time as effectively as feasible during sales operations. Adaptive selling is the capacity to adjust sales strategies

and presentations throughout sales operations to accommodate consumers (Zakaria et al., 2018).

c. Sales Training and Salesperson Performance

The third hypothesis shows that sales training is not significant affects salesperson performance. According to the result that hypothesis 3 (H3) has a value of t-statistics 1,076 is less than 1.96 and a p-value of 0.003 is greater than 0.05; it can be stated that H3 is not accepted. This hypothesis is confirmed by prior studies indicating that sales training did not indicate the direct influence on salesperson performance (Waheed et al., 2017).

d. Sales Experience and Salesperson Performance

The fourth hypothesis shows that sales experience is not significant affects salesperson performance. According to the result of this research, this hypothesis 4 (H4) has a value of t-statistics 0,117, which is less than 1.96, and a p-value of 0.907, which is greater than 0.05; it can be stated that H4 is not accepted. This hypothesis is confirmed by prior studies indicating that sales experience did not indicate the direct influence on salesperson performance (Basir et al., 2010).

e. Adaptive Selling Behavior and Salesperson Performance

The fifth hypothesis shows that adaptive selling behavior has a significant effect on salesperson performance. According to the result of this study, this hypothesis 5 (H₅) is supported with a value of t-statistics 2,054 which is bigger than 1.96, and a p-value of 0.041 which is smaller than 0.05 then it can be stated that H₅ is accepted.

This hypothesis is confirmed by prior studies indicating that adaptive selling behavior has a significant effect on salesperson performance (Ahmad et al., 2021; R.M et al., 2019). The capacity of salespeople to meet sales quotas is contingent on their adaptability to a changing sales environment. During the course of a transaction, salespeople are able to adapt their sales approach to fulfill consumer requirements. Adaptive selling has a positive influence on performance (Amenuvor et al., 2021). Adaptive salespeople can gain higher sales success (Ahmad & Akbar, 2020).

f. Sales Training, Adaptive Selling Behavior, and Salesperson Performance

The sixth hypothesis shows that adaptive selling behavior will positively mediate the influence of sales training on salesperson performance. According to the result of this study, this hypothesis 6 (H₆) is supported with a value of t-statistics 2,611 which is bigger than 1.96, and a p-value of 0.009 which is smaller than 0.05 then it can be stated that H₆ is accepted.

This hypothesis is confirmed by prior studies indicating that adaptive selling behavior will positively mediate the influence of sales training on salesperson performance (Indrawati, 2021). The organization provides sales training to enhance salespeople's skills to raise client sales efficacy. Sales training may impact salesperson productivity (Wahyuningsih, 2019). Training may refresh salespeople's expertise with new ideas and information so that enhancing their adaptability skills (Ahmad & Akbar, 2020). Training in sales may enhance the talents and adaptability of salespeople, making them more agile. Adaptable salespeople can adapt their sales presentations during customer meetings to affect performance (Indrawati, 2021).

g. Sales Experience, Adaptive Selling Behavior, and Salesperson Performance

The seventh hypothesis shows that adaptive selling behavior will positively mediate the influence of sales experience on salesperson performance. According to the result of this study, this hypothesis 7 (H₇) is supported with a value of t-statistics 3,703 which is bigger

than 1.96, and a p-value of 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05 then it can be stated that H_7 is accepted.

This hypothesis is confirmed by prior studies indicating that adaptive selling behavior will positively mediate the influence of sales experience on salesperson performance (Abdolvand, M.A., Farzaneh, 2013). Customers will be well-understood and well-informed by salespeople with substantial job experience. In addition, seasoned salespeople are more adaptable and have greater abilities to maintain customer satisfaction, making it easier for them to close sales deals. Adaptability enhances the efficacy and efficiency of everyday tasks, hence contributing to total sales performance (Abdolvand, M.A., Farzaneh, 2013).

h. Research Contributions

1. Theoretical Contribution

This study enriches the literature on the relationship between the constructs used and as a model for the link between sales training, sales experience, adaptive selling behavior, and salesperson performance. In addition, the findings of this study fill and answer gaps and support the theoretical ideas of previous studies.

This study provides theoretical contributions related to the concept and correlation between sales training and sales experience in supporting adaptive selling behavior influences the salesperson performance in the heavy equipment industry. The First, this study examines the relationship between sales training and adaptive selling behavior. This confirms that sales training has a positive relationship to adaptive selling behavior. The Second, this study examines the relationship between sales experience and adaptive selling behavior. This confirms that sales experience has a positive relationship to adaptive selling behavior. The Third, this study examines the relationship between sales training and salesperson performance. This confirms that sales training has not a significant effect on salesperson performance. Fourth, this study examines the relationship between sales experience and salesperson performance. This confirms that sales experience has not a significant effect on salesperson performance.

Fifth, this study examines the relationship between adaptive selling behavior and salesperson performance. This confirms and emphasizes that adaptive selling behavior has a positive relationship with salesperson performance.

Sixth, this study examines the relationship between sales training, adaptive selling behavior, and salesperson performance. This confirms and emphasizes that adaptive selling behavior will positively mediate the influence of sales training on salesperson performance. Lastly, this study examines the relationship between sales experience, adaptive selling behavior, and salesperson performance. This confirms and emphasizes that adaptive selling behavior will positively mediate the influence of sales experience on salesperson performance.

2. Practical Contribution

ABC Company is currently facing many challenges in competitors' speed of strategy and activities. Based on the data and conclusions from the results of hypothesis testing in this study, the management of ABC Company, especially the sales division and human resources division, needs to collaborate to evaluate more salesperson development programs that can improve competence, especially the ability to adapt to very dynamic competitive situations and conditions. In addition, this study also shows that sales experience is the most influential variable on adaptive selling behavior. Hence, ABC Company management must also create strategies and competency acceleration programs to accelerate sales experience. The acceleration program is in the form of special project assignments such as customer solution management. The program connects the company's sales strategy, salesperson development

activities, and business processes that occur during dealing with customers so that salespersons will more quickly acquire and develop various competencies and skills while in the field, such as canvassing, prospecting, presentation, negotiating, closing, and considerable skills in managing customers as long-term business partners.

IV. Conclusion

4.1 Conclusion

Based on the previous discussion, it can be concluded as follows:

1. Sales training has a significant effect on adaptive selling behavior.
2. Sales experience has a significant effect on adaptive selling behavior.
3. Sales training has not a significant effect on salesperson performance.
4. Sales experience has not a significant effect on salesperson performance.
5. Adaptive selling behavior has a significant effect on salesperson performance.
6. Adaptive selling behavior will positively mediate the influence of sales training on salesperson performance.
7. Adaptive selling behavior will positively mediate the influence of sales experience on salesperson performance.

4.2 Research Limitation

This study is done within the context of a company engaged in the sale of heavy equipment with respondents limited to 96 employees who work as salespeople (business consultants) who only sell heavy equipment units of ABC Company and do not include salespeople who sell spare parts and provide service. From the research background and literature review, this study only measures four variables, namely sales training (independent variable), sales experience (independent variable), adaptive selling behavior (mediating variable), and salesperson performance (dependent variable). From these variables, seven hypotheses were made according to the previous discussion.

4.3 Recommendation for Future Research

The author suggests that further research can be conducted in several similar companies/industries with a more expansive and diverse number of respondents (respondents not only come from salespersons but also take samples from branch managers, sales managers, and all parties related to sales activities). In addition, further research needs to measure other variables related to sales performance to provide a complete picture of the elements that affect salesperson performance, especially in the heavy equipment industry with different business characteristics from businesses in other sectors.

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