"The effect of recruitment and selection on salesperson performance of a vehicle manufacturing company in Nigeria"

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THE EFFECT OF RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION ON SALESPERSON PERFORMANCE OF A VEHICLE MANUFACTURING COMPANY IN NIGERIA

Abstract

Organizations should equip human resources and sales managers with the vital information and knowledge needed to recruit and select salespersons with the required qualities to help them achieve improved sales performance. This paper aims to determine a salesperson's educational qualification, selling experience, and persuasive ability and their effect on the salesperson's performance at Innoson Motors Manufacturing Company Ltd. The study surveyed 131 company staff to collect the data; only 120 questionnaires were correctly filled and returned. First, the study checked the instrument's reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.982). Data were then analyzed using a simple linear regression analysis. The findings revealed that salesperson educational qualification has a significant positive effect on salesperson performance ($r = 0.944$; $t = 54.251$; $F = 2943.209$; $p < 0.05$). Next, salesperson selling experience was found to have a significant positive effect on salesperson performance ($r = 0.964$; $t = 68.905$; $F = 4747.922$; $p < 0.05$). Finally, salesperson persuasive ability was found to have a significant positive effect on salesperson performance ($r = 0.960$; $t = 64.812$; $F = 4200.634$; $p < 0.05$). Hence, company managers can use the findings of this paper to understand that employing highly educated, experienced, and persuasive salespersons will lead to improved salesperson performance.

Keywords	educational qualification, experience, persuasive ability, resource-based theory, organization
JEL Classification	M31, O15

INTRODUCTION

Competition has risen tremendously in many industries; thus, the management of most organizations is looking for the best set of people to employ (Koponen et al., 2019). Indeed, organizations focus their interest on establishing and sustaining market leadership. The only way to achieve this is by recruiting salespersons with what it takes to acquire and retain profitable customers. Therefore, organizations are more interested in those salespersons with good company, customer, product, and service knowledge and experience capable of attracting more customers than competitors.

While many businesses employ salespersons without considering their selling skills and abilities, a few are beginning to employ salespersons with good selling qualities (Otoo et al., 2018). Salespersons with these qualities are better equipped to identify customer problems and expectations; they are more disposed to introduce innovative approaches that will satisfy customers by solving their problems. The satisfaction of clients' needs will result in repeated purchases and customer loyalty. Thus, as many customers embark on repurchase behavior and become

loyal, salesperson performance will highly improve, and the company's goal will be achieved. Although the ultimate interest of many organizations is to make a profit and show high business performance, achieving it can be problematic. Jobber et al. (2019) remarked that excelling in selling jobs requires an organization's deliberate plan and commitment toward recruiting salespersons with the requisite traits such as personality, integrity, education background, experience, persuasiveness, intelligence, product and service knowledge, confidence, business acumen, adaptability, and communication skills.

Astonishingly, many organizations across the globe have recorded poor sales and business growth consequent to inadequate selling skills found in salespersons (Yi et al., 2021). In Nigeria, unemployment is so enormous that recruiting qualified salespersons with requisite selling traits and qualities has become difficult. Sadly, job seekers pay money to secure jobs in Nigeria (Olawoyin, 2021) notwithstanding whether they are qualified or not to perform those jobs. This has led to poor sales performance, poor overall business growth, and the failure of many businesses.

Organizations can only achieve high performance by investing their money in recruiting salespersons with the requisite selling qualities and traits. Salespeople must possess the required qualities to achieve and sustain a competitive business position by attaining unshakable sales performance. Hence, this study collates empirical facts to determine the crucial evaluation of a salesperson's educational qualification, experience, and persuasive ability to improve performance, in the example of a local automobile manufacturing company in Nigeria.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Selling has become a delicate and important phenomenon that needs special skill acquisition and development to enhance an organization's salesperson performance (Islam et al., 2016). This is because customer behavior is influenced by a salesperson's selling effort and acumen (Madhani, 2017). The effective management of the salespersons (Amoako & Okpattah, 2018) propagates a company's improved sales growth and superior performance through diligent recruitment and selection processes. Amoako and Okpattah (2018) also observed that it is difficult to manage salespersons that are poorly screened and selected to attain superior company performance. Recruiting and selecting experienced and sophisticated salespersons is a costly millennial investment. Companies that wish to survive must work hard to become a victor in the most competitive marketing environments (Okolo et al., 2016).

Hiring people to assign roles and tasks to them is known as recruitment. Uduji and Onwumere (2013) stated that recruitment entails assembling qualified applicants to acquire a job. Conversely, selection requires screening for the best-performed applicant based on the job's requisite qualification (Uduji & Nnabuko, 2008). Recruitment

and selection are pertinent to the success of many organizations because meeting customer expectations depends on recruiting and selecting personnel who clearly understand who the customer is (Zeithaml et al., 2018).

Indeed, a company's sales growth depends on the quality of its salespersons (Jobber et al., 2019). The job market is ironically highly saturated with millions of qualified graduates; hence, impressing recruiters by being different in a particular way is what it takes to be chosen as a more viable candidate (Amoako & Okpattah, 2018). Consequently, employers are looking for unique candidates with exceptional skills and talents who know their capabilities and how to leverage them to guarantee the company's success. Nonetheless, this study discusses tripartite recruitment and selection strategies such as salesperson educational qualification, selling experience, and persuasive ability to determine their effect on performance.

1.1. Salesperson educational qualification

Acquiring knowledge is vital as it profoundly affects salesperson performance. Koponen et al. (2019) showed that it takes about ten years to gain adequate sales knowledge to attain higher sales

performance. In the life insurance industry, a fresh salesperson receives many intensive courses that offer the opportunity to connect and interact with different businesses, exposing a salesperson to the professional knowledge, skills, development, and experience required to successfully sell insurance services (Aqmala & Ardyan, 2019). In today's most competitive and dynamic manufacturing and services industries, educational qualification is one of the prerequisites or most fundamental qualities sought-after in the recruitment and selection of salespersons (Jobber et al., 2019).

Gone are the days when non-graduates are recruited to provide selling jobs for companies (Jobber et al., 2019). Instead, higher-education personnel who worked in industry and commerce are recruited as part of their degree. For instance, in Britain, most business degree students have to undergo one year's industrial attachment training. Bolander et al. (2014) reported that students' perception of taking up sales careers was significantly influenced by formal education. Individuals with formal university education in sales have been meeting their companies' required selling expectations. Bolander et al. (2014) also observed that their sales performance was higher than the uneducated salespersons consequent upon better application of specific selling techniques for them.

Additionally, in today's contemporary business world, qualified higher institution graduates and postgraduates are recruited to provide selling activities. Bolander et al. (2014) stated that "many universities are preparing their students to start their careers in the professional selling function through the inclusion of sales education in their business curriculum." Remarkably, graduates, especially those that offered courses related to selling careers, are most preferred. This is because they have the information and knowledge to understand customers' problems and, thus, provide lasting solutions by using persuasive and adaptive communication (Bolander et al., 2014). In fact, as an effective recruitment source, companies recruit from higher education institutions. The targets are those who studied marketing and selling, who are regarded as professionals, who know how best to canvass and scout for potential customers, as well as how to close sales by persuading clients to place immediate orders for products and services they need (Jobber et al., 2019). In addi-

tion, if educated, salespersons can make interaction adjustments with customers (adaptive selling approach) more effectively and efficiently in different selling situations based on customer requirements.

1.2. Salesperson selling experience

Selling experience is a germane element to be considered in salesperson performance (Ahmad & Akbar, 2020). From the management point of view, a sales organization perceives a salesperson's expertise and experience in marketing their offerings as a significant determinant of successful salesperson performance (Aqmala et al., 2021). Salesperson experience is the length of time a particular salesperson has worked in a firm as a professional (Wardoyo et al., 2019). Therefore, experience is essential to consider in recruiting and selecting a salesperson, as it matters a lot to a company's business growth and success. Ahmad and Akbar (2020) reported few studies on selling experience. They revealed that salesperson performance was significantly influenced by salesperson experience. Also, Wardoyo et al. (2019) found that a salesperson's ability to establish and sustain business networks depends on his/her selling experience.

Moreover, when a salesperson possesses a robust selling experience, it indicates that he or she will gain more opportunities to communicate freely with many clients and gain tremendous knowledge and understanding about them, the products, and the services they deal with (Kavoosi et al., 2014). Ko and Dennis (2013) argued that a wide range of working experience would acquaint a salesperson with a deeper understanding of an organization and thus help them to study selling and marketing events as they unfold in the field. In tourism, experience is significant because the more salespersons gain field experience, the more they get product and service knowledge and better serve their customers (Inyang, 2017). Terho et al. (2013) showed that salesperson performance has a positive relationship with salesperson experience. Salleh and Kamaruddin (2011) added that an experienced salesperson possesses more skill, producing more sales performance for a company.

Surprisingly, salesperson experience significantly affects the entire selling process, from prospecting up to follow-up (Abdolvand & Farzaneh, 2013).

Incidentally, a more experienced salesperson may quickly recover lost customers and become an effective and efficient training tool for the firm's junior salespersons focused on improving sales performance (Calixto & Ferreira, 2020).

1.3. Salesperson persuasive ability

Selling a company's products and services is undoubtedly within the purview of the salespersons. To conduct this role effectively and efficiently, a salesperson has to be a good communicator. In the real sense, a salesperson must be an orator to communicate the language of the company, products, and services professionally. In the culture of salesmanship, a salesperson's appearance, voice, gestures, and entire body language need to be a conduit through which customers appreciate, accept, and purchase a product or service. Interestingly, the art and science of selling are not limited to exchanging physical products or intangible services; rather, it encompasses establishing relationships.

Persuading customers by getting along with them during selling is a compelling interpersonal skill salesperson adopt (Koponen et al., 2019). Persuasion occurs between the salesperson and the prospective customer whose interests are conflicted when actualizing sales (Huang, 2019). For effective and successful persuasion, a salesperson must adopt an adaptive selling approach to identify, customize, and satisfy various customer needs and wants (Huang, 2019). This is because persuasion douses selling tensions and uncertainties in a customer (Singh et al., 2017). During persuasion, a salesperson appeals to the customer's self-interest by vividly describing his or her company's product features (Coffman & Niehaus, 2020). Yeo et al. (2019) noted that the adaptive selling approach is a skillful way of encouraging and convincing customers to respond positively to a product or service offering.

Nonetheless, a salesperson with a high persuasive ability can turn potential customers into real-time customers, thereby generating high sales performance (Punwatkar & Varghese, 2014). Punwatkar and Varghese (2014) suggested that salespersons need good company and product knowledge coupled with the self-confidence to conquer objections and close sales when due through shrewd persuasion. Persuading or convincing a customer

to purchase a product or service is difficult; most times, many salespersons perceive closing sales as a jigsaw puzzle. Magandini and Ngwenya (2015) discovered that verbal persuasion influenced 25% of salespersons' actualization of their sales targets. Anyadighibe et al. (2014) concluded that a whole lot of persuasion is required to overcome the handling objection stage of the personal selling process.

1.4. Salesperson performance

Salesperson performance is highly imperative to the growth and success of any organization. Therefore, it is necessary to ascertain in an organization, especially when a product is newly developed and commercialized in the market (A. Manzoor & K. Manzoor, 2017). Hence, for the management of many organizations, gaining a better understanding of salesperson performance is very important. This is factual because an organization's assessment of salesperson performance will expose whether it is achieving growth or tilting toward failure. In support of this, Ahmad and Akbar (2020) noted that salesperson performance, which is a crucial element in any industry, substantially contributed to the organization's success. They revealed that salesperson creativity, adaptive selling behavior, and selling experience significantly influence salesperson performance.

However, salesperson performance is the outcome considering the array of significant activities conducted across many different selling jobs and situations (Singh & Das, 2013). A salesperson's behaviors encourage buyer-seller relationships and increase sales and profits for the selling organization (Herjanto & Franklin, 2019). Calixto and Ferreira (2020) highlighted that salesperson performance appraisal, which they argued, is a process that organizations conduct several times yearly. Accordingly, the knowledge and skills acquired by a salesperson improve his/her experience, thus promoting the entire job performance. Singh et al. (2015) focused on a salesperson's belief in oneself, selling skills, and adaptability to selling and their impact on salesperson performance.

More so, adaptive selling entails embarking on customer-oriented selling approaches. It means having adequate knowledge to alter interactions

to suit customer needs and aspirations based on their psychological dispositions in different and divergent selling situations. Terho et al. (2013) revealed that salesperson performance positively correlates with adaptive selling. In agreement with this exposé, Aqmala and Ardyan (2019) emphasized that adopting a customer-centric selling approach will significantly affect the performance of salespersons. In addition, Aqmala et al. (2021) revealed that salesperson performance improved significantly due to the introduction of a customer orientation strategy into the company's selling culture. Also, salesperson performance is positively impacted by the customer relationship quality.

1.5. Resource-based view or theory

The resource-based theory (RBT) has become a dominant paradigm in strategic management. It has been applied in related fields such as marketing, operations management, human resource management, and entrepreneurship (Hitt et al., 2016). The theory originated from economics and was propounded by Penrose (1959). Managers use this theory widely for project management (Almarri & Gardiner, 2014). RBT emphasizes the relevance of human resources in gaining a competitive advantage and realizing organizational objectives (Barney, 2001). An organization's competitive advantage is driven by its own resources. So, competitive advantage can seamlessly be achieved through acquiring, developing, and retaining the best human resources (Chidi, 2013). RBT explores the relationship between a firm's growth (performance) and its resources (Almarri & Gardiner, 2014). It has been widely applied in organizational performance studies (Ahmed et al., 2018). The theory stipulates that organizational performance is highly a function of the capability of the human resources makeup (Ahmed et al., 2018).

Ahmed et al. (2018) remarked that organizational performance is improved by these resources and capabilities, which previously earned a competitive advantage for the firm. RBT strongly backs a positive relationship between organizational performance and its internal resource capabilities and competencies. Furthermore, it holds the view that an organization's success relies strongly on the viability of its workers (Davis & DeWitt, 2021). Thus, in this study, RBT is adopted as recruiting

and selecting more qualified salespersons (human resources) based on educational qualification, experience, and persuasive ability will lead to more salesperson performance and higher competitive advantage for the company.

2. AIM AND HYPOTHESES

This paper aims to identify the major qualities or traits that can be found in a potential salesperson that would improve his or her performance when recruited by the sales manager to market the company's products and services. Thus, based on a rigorous review of contemporary studies, this paper considered four independent constructs – salesperson educational qualification, salesperson selling experience, and salesperson persuasive ability – to examine their effect on salesperson performance. Then, following the literature review, the hypotheses were put together:

H1: Salesperson educational qualification has a significant positive effect on salesperson performance.

H2: Salesperson selling experience has a significant positive effect on salesperson performance.

H3: Salesperson persuasive ability has a significant positive effect on salesperson performance.

3. METHODOLOGY

The survey method of gathering primary data was adopted, and structured questionnaire copies were administered to the technical and administrative staff of Innoson Vehicle Manufacturing Company Limited. The study covered salesperson educational qualification, selling experience, persuasive ability, and performance.

The study population constitutes 131 technical and administrative staff members of Innoson Motors Manufacturing Company Ltd in Nnewi, Anambra State, Nigeria (the only local auto manufacturing company in Nigeria). The structured copies of questionnaires were administered to the 131 tech-

nical and administrative staff who returned 120 copies duly filled and used for data presentation and analysis.

In determining the validity of the research instrument, the study applied content validity in which questionnaire copies were given to marketing and sales professionals who restructured and corrected the instrument to authenticate it. The Cronbach's alpha was conducted to test the instrument's reliability, and 0.982 was obtained, indicating internal consistency. The simple linear regression analysis tool supported with SPSS version 22 was used to analyze the data.

4. RESULTS

The data generated from the technical and administrative staff of Innoson Motors Manufacturing Company Ltd were presented using descriptive statistics and analyzed using simple linear regression. In addition, descriptive and inferential statistics were used for data analysis.

Table 1 shows that a total of 360 respondents indicated that they strongly agreed, and 234 showed that they agreed. 73 respondents indicated neither agreement nor disagreement. Also, 37 revealed

their disagreement, while 16 showed that they strongly disagreed. Thus, the results show that salesperson educational qualification significantly affects performance.

4.1. Testing hypothesis one

According to Table 3, the residual sum of squares (40.486) is less than the regression sum of squares (332.845), indicating that the model does not explain more of the variation in the dependent variable. Due to chance, the variation explained by the model indicated that the significance value of the F statistics (0.000) is less than 0.05. In Table 2, R is 0.944, indicating that a salesperson's educational qualification significantly positively affects performance. Moreover, the difference in salesperson performance is explained by the model as shown by the R Square value of 89.2%. In the linear regression model, 0.33629, which is low, is the error of the estimate. Indeed, there is no autocorrelation as indicated by the Durbin-Watson statistics of 0.205, which is less than 2. Therefore, the salesperson's educational qualification coefficient of 0.944 indicates a significant positive effect of educational qualification on performance. In Table 4, a t-value of 54.251 is statistically significant. Therefore, the study accepts hypothesis one.

Table 1. Salespersons' educational qualification and performance

Source: Authors' elaboration.

No.	Questionnaire Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
		Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	
1	A salesperson will achieve better performance if he/she has a bachelor's or higher degree	52	43	10	10	05	120
2	A salesperson will understand and gain a good knowledge of customers faster and better if he/she is highly educated, leading to higher performance	57	39	15	05	04	120
3	An educated salesperson's performance will improve due to his/her ability to persuade potential customers of the appealing features of his or her product and company	60	41	11	07	01	120
4	Computer literacy will enhance the creativity of a salesperson in the workplace, thus improving performance	72	34	09	02	03	120
5	An educated salesperson's ability to quickly and radically establish and sustain good relationships with customers and company staff will generate higher performance	55	42	15	06	02	120
6	An educated salesperson will easily be a problem identifier and solution provider for customers and management, thus enhancing his/her performance	64	35	13	07	01	120
	Total	360	234	73	37	16	720

Table 2. Model summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.944[a]	.892	.891	.33629	.205

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), Salesperson Educational Qualification. b. Dependent Variable: Salesperson Performance.

Table 3. ANOVA[a]

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
	Regression	332.845	1	332.845	2943.209	.000b
1	Residual	40.486	358	.113		
	Total	373.331	359			

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Salesperson Performance. b. Predictors: (Constant), Salesperson Educational Qualification.

Table 4. Coefficients[a]

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
	(Constant)	−.280	.084		−3.345	.001
1	Salesperson Educational Qualification	1.035	.019	.944	54.251	.000

Note: a Dependent Variable: Salesperson Performance.

Table 5. Salesperson's selling experience and performance

<div align="right">Source: Authors' elaboration.</div>

No.	Questionnaire Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
		Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	
1	A salesperson will improve performance if he or she has sold a similar product before and then have a better understanding and knowledge about the company's products, customers, and territories	68	45	05	02	0	120
2	A salesperson will do better if he or she has built and sustained good rapport with customers in the past and can provide an up-selling experience with them at all time	57	48	08	05	02	120
3	Salesperson performance will improve if he or she shows evidence of having provided cross-selling encounters with their customers in their former company	74	41	03	01	01	120
4	If a salesperson has selling experience, he or she can quickly embark on a system selling approach with customers, thus improving salesperson performance	59	54	07	0	0	120
5	When a salesperson has sold a product or service before, establishing a good relationship with customers and management will be easier, and this will help to improve performance	66	45	04	02	03	120
6	An experienced salesperson can efficiently and effectively traverse sales territories to track potential customers using a consultative selling approach leading to increased performance	64	40	10	05	01	120
	TOTAL	388	273	37	15	07	720

Table 5 shows that a total of 388 respondents indicated that they strongly agreed, and 273 showed that they agreed. 37 respondents indicated neither agreement nor disagreement. Also, 15 revealed their disagreement, while 7 showed that they strongly disagreed. This means that salesperson selling experience has a significant positive effect on performance.

4.2. Testing hypothesis two

According to Table 7, the residual sum of squares (14.349) is less than the regression sum of squares (190.306), indicating that the model does not explain more of the variation in the dependent variable. Due to chance, the variation explained by the model indicated that the significance value of the F statistics (0.000) is less than 0.05. Also, in Table 6, R is 0.964, indicating that salesperson selling experience significantly positively affects salesperson performance. Moreover, the difference in salesperson performance is explained by the model as shown by the R Square value of 93.0%. In the linear regression model, 0.20020, which is low, is the error of the estimate. Indeed, there is no autocorrelation, as indicated by the Durbin-Watson statistics value of 0.392, which is less than 2. Therefore, the salesperson's selling experience coefficient of 0.964 indicates a significant positive effect of salesperson selling experience on performance. In Table 8, a t-value of 68.905 is statistically significant. Therefore, the study accepts hypothesis two.

Table 9 shows that a total of 353 respondents indicated that they strongly agreed, and 304 showed that they agreed. 39 respondents indicated neither agreement nor disagreement. Also, 16 revealed their disagreement, while 8 showed that they strongly disagreed. It means that salesperson persuasive ability has a significant positive effect on performance.

Table 6. Model summary[b]

Mode l	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.964[a]	.930	.930	.20020	.392

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), Salesperson Selling Experience. b. Dependent Variable: Salesperson Performance.

Table 7. ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	190.306	1	190.306	4747.922	.000b
	Residual	14.349	358	.040		
	Total	204.656	359			

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Salesperson Performance. b. Predictors: (Constant), Salesperson Selling Experience.

Table 8. Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.333	.061		5.502	.000
	Salesperson Selling Experience	.934	.014	.964	68.905	.000

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Salesperson Performance.

Table 9. Salespersons' persuasive ability and performance

Source: Authors' elaboration.

No.	Questionnaire Statements	Strongly Agree Rate	Agree Rate	Neither Agree Nor Disagree Rate	Disagree Rate	Strongly Disagree Rate	Total
1	A salesperson will be more convincing and achieve better performance if he/she uses appearance, voice, gestures, and entire body language to reveal an excellent image of himself or herself, the product, and the company	60	52	05	02	01	120
2	A salesperson will persuade customers better and improve performance if he/she has good knowledge of the company's product and can predict the customer's psychological dispositions during sales	61	49	06	03	01	120

Table 9 (cont.). Salespersons' persuasive ability and performance

No.	Questionnaire Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
		Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	Rate	
3	A salesperson will be more confident and adaptable and perform better in selling when he/she knows the company's policy very well	59	51	07	02	01	120
4	If a salesperson knows purchasing trends, habits, and culture, he/she will be more persuasive in selling and will thus achieve improved performance	63	48	07	02	0	120
5	If a salesperson has the past sold many similar products, he/she will garner adequate information and knowledge about them and will be more persuasive, thus achieving greater performance	56	55	04	02	03	120
6	If a salesperson is neat and has the courage and confidence about himself or herself, in the products or services, and the company, he/she will be more persuasive and thus attain better performance	54	49	10	05	02	120
	Total	353	304	39	16	08	720

4.3. Testing hypothesis three

According to Table 11, the residual sum of squares (15.654) is less than the regression sum of squares (183.677), indicating that the model does not explain more of the variation in the dependent variable. Due to chance, the variation explained by the model indicated that the significance value of the F statistics (0.000) is less than 0.05. In Table 10, R is 0.960, indicating that salesperson persuasive ability significantly positively affects performance. So, the difference in salesperson performance is explained by the model as shown by the R Square value of 92.1%. In the linear regression model, 0.20911, which is low, is the error of the estimate. Indeed, there is no autocorrelation, as indicated by the Durbin-Watson statistics value of 0.455, which is less than 2. Therefore, a salesperson's persuasive ability coefficient of 0.960 indicates a significant positive effect of persuasive ability on performance. In Table 12, a t-value of 64.812 is statistically significant. Therefore, the study accepts hypothesis three. The overall results of the hypotheses testing are shown in Figure 1.

Table 10. Model summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.960[a]	.921	.921	.20911	.455

Note: a. Predictors: (Constant), Salesperson Persuasive Ability. b. Dependent Variable: Salesperson Performance.

Table 11. ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	183.677	1	183.677	4200.634	.000b
	Residual	15.654	358	.044		
	Total	199.331	359			

Note: a. Dependent Variable: Salesperson Performance. b. Predictors: (Constnt), Salesperson Persuasive Ability.

Table 12. Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.563	.060		9.381	.000
	Salesperson Persuasive Ability	.883	.014	.960	64.812	.000

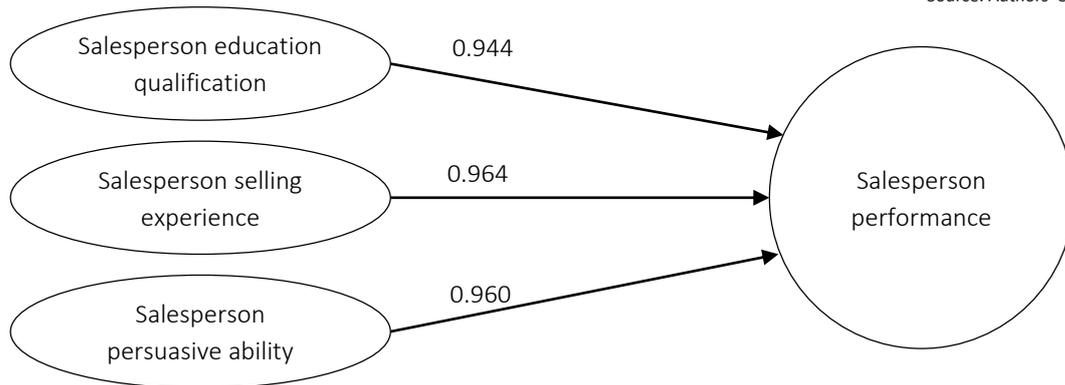*Note*: a. Dependent Variable: Salesperson Performance.

Figure 1. Hypothetical causal model results

5. DISCUSSION

Hypothesis one revealed that educational qualifications significantly positively affect salesperson performance (r = 0.944, p < 0.05). If a salesperson possesses higher educational qualifications, he/she will be more knowledgeable about the company's offerings. As a result, he/she will easily identify customer needs and proffer a lasting solution, leading to repeat purchases and improved salesperson performance. In support of this, Bolander et al. (2014) revealed that salesperson performance improved significantly consequent upon sales education acquired by the salespersons. Ahmad and Akbar (2020) found that experience improves salesperson performance through acquiring education and skills. Claro and Laban Neto (2011) showed that the sales manager's educational qualification strongly influenced performance. In addition, they stated that sales performance is appreciated simultaneously as the level of education gets higher. In accordance with this finding, Sunardi et al. (2012) reported the lack of formal education as the cause of the lack of skills and professionalism among company salespersons; this is the bane of the growth of small business enterprises.

Testing hypothesis two, the study revealed that salesperson selling experience significantly positively affects performance (r = 0.964, p < 0.05). It indicates that a highly experienced salesperson can make an effective and efficient sales presentation and use all he or she has acquired in previous selling situations to persuade customers to purchase his or her products. Indeed, an experienced salesperson knows how to use an adaptive selling approach to change the attitude of the potential cus-

tomer from rejection to accepting his or her products and services. In accordance with this, Ahmad and Akbar (2020) revealed that salesperson performance was significantly influenced by salesperson experience. This indicates that salespersons will communicate and interact more convincingly with their customers and acquire more information and knowledge as their experience increases.

Similarly, Wardoyo et al. (2019) found that salesperson experience significantly influenced salesperson performance. According to Wardoyo et al. (2019), salesperson selling experience influences his or her ability to develop and sustain business relationships with different clients. Inyang (2017) revealed that salesperson experience has a strong relationship with salesperson performance. Aqmala et al. (2021) supported this finding, stating that a sales organization, from the management point of view, perceives salesperson experience as a powerful determinant of effective salesperson performance. This agrees with Terho et al. (2013), who found that salesperson performance has a positive relationship with salesperson experience. Moreover, Okolo et al. (2016) noted that a salesperson's previous selling experience had a significant positive relationship with the successful operation of the sales force structure. Furthermore, Calixto and Ferreira (2020) reported that an experienced salesperson recovers lost customers more than the inexperienced one and may provide training for the firm's junior salespersons, thus improving sales performance.

Finally, hypothesis three revealed that salesperson persuasive ability significantly positively affects performance (r = 0.960, p < 0.05). If a salesperson

possesses persuasive power, he or she will attract and retain more customers leading to improved salesperson performance. This is in line with Muzumdar et al. (2021), who asserted that a salesperson's ability to persuade a customer significantly improves a salesperson's performance. Similarly, Gadzhiyeva and Sager (2017) found an association between salesperson performance, ability to persuade, and power of language. Also, Punwatkar and Varghese (2014) stated that a salesperson with high persuasive ability could turn potential customers into actual customers, thereby increasing sales performance. In line with this, Ahmad and Akbar (2020) noted that salesperson performance has a significant positive relationship with selling adaptability. Abiaziem and Bako (2019) showed that salesperson persuasive ability affected customer retention in the banking industry.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to determine the effect of a salesperson's educational qualification, selling experience, and persuasive ability on performance in an auto manufacturing company in Nigeria. Firstly, it was found that educational qualification has a significant positive effect on performance. It means that the performance will improve when sales managers recruit a salesperson with a higher education qualification. Similarly, the finding also showed that salesperson selling experience significantly positively affects salesperson performance. This will also signify that recruiting salespersons with past selling experience will attract higher performance than recruiting those without previous selling experience. The study also found that a salesperson's ability to persuade customers significantly positively affects performance. It indicates that the performance of salespersons with persuasive selling ability will improve when recruited, unlike recruiting without considering the persuasive traits found in the salespersons.

Furthermore, a prospective salesperson who has previously performed selling with any manufacturing company will be seen as a better candidate for recruitment by the company. This is consequent to the fact that experience matters much in any interaction and relationship. Unarguably, a prospective salesperson with higher educational qualifications will be more crafty, creative, and adaptive to encourage customers to place their immediate demands for products and services. Moreover, the persuasive quality of a salesperson is leveraged toward breaking objection barriers focused on closing sales instantaneously with the customer's acceptance of the products.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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