

The Role of Adaptive Selling Behavior in Mediating Sales Orientation and Customer Orientation on Salesperson Performance

Original Article

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Abstract

The decline in Mitsubishi Xpander sales indicates problems in sales force performance. Based on preliminary field reports, the suspected problem is related to the suboptimal sales orientation and customer orientation in shaping adaptive sales behaviour. Accordingly, this inquiry endeavors to elucidate the influence of sales orientation and customer orientation on the performance of the Mitsubishi Xpander sales force in Semarang, positioning adaptive sales behaviour as an intervening mechanism. Adopting a quantitatively driven research design, empirical evidence was garnered from 104 purposively selected respondents. The analytical procedure employed Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) via SmartPLS 4.0. The empirical findings demonstrate that both sales orientation and customer orientation exert a statistically robust and affirmative effect on adaptive sales behaviour, which in turn manifests a significant and positive contribution to sales force performance. Notably, customer orientation, in conjunction with adaptive sales behaviour, emerges as the most potent conduit for enhancing the performance of Mitsubishi Xpander sales personnel within the Semarang context. Customer orientation enables salespeople to understand customer needs and provide appropriate services, while adaptive sales behaviour helps them adjust their approach to different customer characteristics and situations. The findings imply that sales orientation and customer orientation can shape more adaptive sales behaviour, thereby playing a role in driving improvements in sales personnel performance in achieving targets and retaining customers.

Keywords: Adaptive Sales Behaviour, Customer Orientation, Sales Force Performance, Sales Orientation.

1. Introduction

In the highly competitive automotive industry, the ability of a salesperson is the key factor in determining sales levels, which in turn affects the company's success in retaining customers and increasing revenue. Therefore, sales performance is used to assess the activities and results achieved through their efforts (Evita, 2023).

Both sales orientation and customer orientation serve as instrumental orientations in elevating the professional effectiveness of sales agents. Sales orientation focuses on initiatives to boost sales (Marselinus & Ardyan, 2024), whereas customer orientation emphasises understanding consumer needs and tailoring responses to satisfy them (Zuraida, 2022). These two orientations help shape adaptive sales behavior, which is the ability of salespeople to tailor their approach to each customer's character, change strategies, and devise the most appropriate approach for each consumer.

Mitsubishi Xpander sales are greatly influenced by the performance of salespeople. The better they are at understanding customer needs, offering products, and building



relationships, the higher the Xpander sales will be, which ultimately improves the company's performance and revenue.

Table 1. Mitsubishi Xpander Sales Data for 2020-2024

Year	Number of Units Sold	% Growth
2020	183	-
2021	203	10,93%
2022	290	42,86%
2023	257	-11,38%
2024	213	-17,12%

Source: Internal Company Data, Processed (2025)

Based on Table 1, Mitsubishi Xpander sales have fluctuated over the past five years. After rising 10.93% in 2021 and 42.86% in 2022, sales fell again in 2023 and 2024 by 11.38% and 17.12%. This downward trajectory signifies underlying deficiencies in sales force performance, ostensibly attributable to inadequately cultivated sales orientation and customer orientation in shaping adaptive sales behavior. Specifically, the sales force demonstrates a limited capacity to recalibrate its selling approach, communicative modality, and proposed product solutions in alignment with the heterogeneous characteristics, evolving needs, and situational contingencies of customers. Several previous studies (Hidayati et al., 2017; Marselinus & Ardyan, 2024; Nufuz & Graciafernandy, 2024) found that sales orientation, customer orientation, and adaptive sales behavior have a strong impact on sales force performance at a significant level.

However, according to Aqmala (2019) and Santika (2023) argues that when sales orientation becomes too dominant, this situation does not always result in improved performance. Based on these differing findings, there is a research gap that needs to be explored further. Accordingly, this study is undertaken to interrogate the effects of sales orientation and customer orientation on Mitsubishi Xpander sales personnel, with adaptive sales behavior conceptualized as an intervening mechanism.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Sales Orientation

According to Marselinus and Ardyan (2024), sales orientation is a business approach that emphasises strategies to drive sales success. Baber et al. (2018) adds that this orientation prioritises profit acquisition by increasing the intensity of sales activities. Business profit can be achieved through strategies that focus on increasing sales volume (Santika, 2023). In line with Rizan and Utama (2020), sales orientation describes the tendency of salespeople to seek transactions from every customer through a series of intensive sales activities. Overall, sales orientation emphasises increasing sales as the main way to make a profit.

According to Marselinus and Ardyan (2024), the indicators of sales orientation are (1) a primary focus on sales volume, (2) providing excessive information, (3) pressuring customers to increase their purchase value beyond their initial needs, (4) presenting products in a positive light, and (5) providing recommendations based on personal gain.

2.2. Customer Orientation

According to Nufuz and Graciafernandy (2024), Zuraida (2022) and Yeo and Jan (2022), customer orientation is an effort to understand and meet buyer needs to achieve customer satisfaction. Agustina (2016) emphasises the importance of tailoring sales responses

to consumer needs. Hidayati et al. (2017) adds that customer orientation also includes the ability of sellers to recognise customers, achieve targets and create the best value, which ultimately guides customers in determining the appropriate purchase choices (Saxe & Weitz, 2018). Overall, customer orientation is a process to ensure that customer needs are met and their satisfaction levels are achieved.

According to Dewi and Nuzuli (2017), the indicators of customer orientation are (1) commitment to satisfying customers, (2) collecting information related to customer needs and preferences, (3) finding the most effective approach to providing satisfaction, (4) understanding complaints that arise and making improvements, and (5) giving individual attention to each customer.

2.3. Adaptive Sales Behaviour

According to Hidayati et al. (2017), Wang et al. (2021) and Yeo and Jan (2022), adaptive sales behaviour includes the ability to change sales methods based on information about sales characteristics and situations. Agustina (2016), Mulki and Kamath (2025), and Nufuz and Graciafernandy (2024) explain that adaptive sales behaviour also requires flexibility and the ability to adjust presentation styles. In practice, salespeople interact directly with consumers to explore in depth the various obstacles or problems they experience from the customer's own perspective (Zuraida, 2022). Overall, adaptive sales behaviour is the ability to adjust sales behaviour and actions to align with customer needs.

According to Yeo and Jan (2022), the indicators of adaptive sales behaviour are (1) the ability to change sales behaviour according to the situation, (2) the ability to adjust actions for different customers, (3) flexibility in taking sales actions, (4) adjusting the approach to customer characteristics, and (5) the ability to change sales style based on customer feedback.

2.4. Sales Force Performance

According to Evita (2023) and Purbasari and Veno (2019), sales force performance is key to achieving organisational goals. Research (Hidayati et al., 2017; Nufuz & Graciafernandy, 2024; Oprea & Ionescu-avram, 2025; Singh & Das, 2013) explain that this performance reflects how salespeople work and the level of target achievement for the work they have done. Zuraida (2022) adds that sales personnel performance forms the basis for evaluating salespeople's contributions in meeting targets. Overall, the performance of a salesperson reflects their success and contribution in achieving the company's targets and objectives.

According to Evita (2023), the performance indicators for sales personnel are (1) the achievement of sales targets, (2) an increase in the number of new customers, (3) the volume of sales, and (4) the success in marketing new products.

2.5. Conceptual Framework

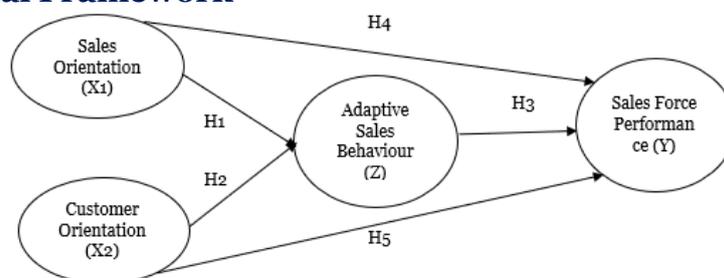


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

The hypothesized relationships derived from the preceding theoretical discussion are integrated into the conceptual framework, as depicted in Figure 1.

2.6. The Relationship Between Sales Orientation and Adaptive Sales Behaviour

According to Marselinus and Ardyan (2024), sales orientation shows a positive and significant value on adaptive sales behaviour, and an increase in sales orientation has an impact on the flexibility of sales practices. This contributes to building trust between both parties (Guenzi et al., 2016), thereby encouraging sales personnel to be more adaptive. Referring to the previous explanation, the hypothesis formulation is:

H1: Sales orientation has a positive and significant effect on adaptive sales behaviour.

2.7. The Relationship Between Customer Orientation and Adaptive Sales Behaviour

The extant body of scholarship (Harindranath et al., 2019; Hidayati et al., 2017; Kaynak et al., 2016; Zuraida, 2022) converges on the assertion that customer orientation serves as a salient antecedent of adaptive sales behaviour. When customer orientation increases, sales personnel become more capable of adjusting their approach, meeting and identifying customer needs, and developing better relationships, thereby encouraging adaptive sales behaviour. Referring to the previous explanation, the research hypothesis is:

H2: Customer orientation has a positive and significant effect on adaptive sales behaviour.

2.8. The Relationship Between Adaptive Sales Behaviour and Sales Force Performance

According to research (Amenuvor et al., 2021; Charoensukmongkol & Suthatorn, 2020; Hamdani & Santoso, 2022; Nufuz & Graciafernandy, 2024; Yeo & Jan, 2022; Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2020), indicate that adaptive sales behaviour can contribute positively and significantly to sales force performance. When adaptive sales abilities are optimal, performance increases to its maximum. Adaptive sales behaviour consistently contributes to maximising performance in various selling techniques. Referring to the previous explanation, the hypothesis formulation is:

H3: Adaptive sales behaviour has a positive and significant effect on sales force performance.

2.9. The Relationship Between Sales Orientation and Sales Force Performance

Empirical findings reported by Adusei et al. (2020) indicate that sales orientation exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on sales force performance. This evidence is further corroborated by Rizan and Utama (2020), who demonstrate that a well-established sales orientation is positively associated with business performance, thereby implying its pivotal role in enhancing sales force effectiveness. Moreover, Revan et al. (2025) affirm that sales orientation contributes meaningfully to sales performance when examined simultaneously, reinforcing its salience as a key determinant of performance enhancement. Referring to the previous explanation, the research hypothesis is:

H4: Sales orientation has a positive and significant effect on sales force performance.

2.10. The Relationship Between Customer Orientation and Sales Force Performance

According to research (ELSamen & Akroush, 2018; Hamdani & Santoso, 2022; Kuo et al., 2022; Yeo & Jan, 2022; Zuraida, 2022), customer orientation exhibits a significant and affirmative relationship with salesperson performance, wherein increased sensitivity to customer needs enhances performance efficacies, the higher the sales achieved. Referring to the previous explanation, the research hypothesis is:

H5: Customer orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesperson performance.

3. Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative, causally oriented research design intended to explicate the directional relationships among the variables under investigation. Specifically, it examines the effects of sales orientation and customer orientation on sales force performance, while positioning adaptive sales behaviour as an intervening mechanism through which these effects are transmitted (Sugiyono, 2019). The research population consisted of all Mitsubishi Xpander salespeople in the city of Semarang, with a sample size of 104 participants selected using purposive sampling, namely those who had been actively working for at least the last three months.

The data type was primary data from a Likert scale questionnaire survey consisting of 5 points (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Data analysis was executed using SmartPLS 4.0 within the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) framework, which is particularly appropriate for estimating models incorporating mediating constructs. The analytical procedure encompassed assessments of convergent and discriminant validity, reliability evaluation, estimation of both the measurement (outer) and structural (inner) models, as well as hypothesis verification through bootstrapping.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Results

4.1.1. Respondent Data

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis of Respondents

Characteristics	Description	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	67	64,42%
	Female	37	35,58%
	Total	104	100%
Age	< 25 years old	11	10,58%
	25-30 years old	19	18,27%
	31-40 years old	50	48,08%
	41-50 years old	22	21,15%
	> 50 years old	2	1,92%
	Total	104	100%
Education	High School/Vocational School	37	34,62%
	Diploma	11	10,58%
	Bachelor's Degree	56	53,85%
	Total	104	100%
Length of Service	< 1 year	18	17,31%
	1-3 years	32	30,77%
	4-6 years	27	25,96%
	7-10 years	11	10,58%
	> 10 years	16	15,38%
	Total	104	100%
Store Branch	MT Haryono	48	46,15%
	Puri Anjasmoro	56	53,85%
	Total	104	100%

Source: Data Processing 2025

As shown in Table 2, there were 104 research participants, consisting of 67 men (64.42%) and 37 women (35.58%). The majority were aged 31-40 years (48.08%), with the highest level of education being bachelor's degree graduates (53.85%). The length of service was predominantly 1-3 years (30.77%). Respondents came from two Mitsubishi branches, namely MT Haryono with 48 people (46.15%) and Puri Anjasmoro with 56 people (53.85%).

4.1.2. Outer Model Results

Table 3. Convergent Validity Test Results

Indicator	Original Sample Estimate	Description
Sales Orientation		
X1.1	0.826	Valid
X1.2	0.764	Valid
X1.3	0.833	Valid
X1.4	0.813	Valid
X1.5	0.762	Valid
Customer Orientation		
X2.1	0.731	Valid
X2.2	0.885	Valid
X2.3	0.745	Valid
X2.4	0.860	Valid
X2.5	0.706	Valid
Adaptive Sales Behaviour		
Z1	0.752	Valid
Z2	0.741	Valid
Z3	0.712	Valid
Z4	0.837	Valid
Z5	0.782	Valid
Sales Force Performance		
Y1	0.817	Valid
Y2	0.831	Valid
Y3	0.715	Valid
Y4	0.817	Valid

Source: Data Processing 2025

Based on Table 3, all indicators contribute strongly to explaining each construct because they have values > 0.70.

4.1.3. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is considered adequate when a construct has the ability to be distinguished from other constructs (Hair et al., 2018).

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Results

Indicator	Sales Orientation	Customer Orientation	Sales Force Performance	Adaptive Sales Behaviour
X1.1	0.826			
X1.2	0.764			
X1.3	0.833			
X1.4	0.813			
X1.5	0.762			
X2.1		0.731		
X2.2		0.885		
X2.3		0.745		
X2.4		0.860		
X2.5		0.706		
Y1			0.817	
Y2			0.831	
Y3			0.715	
Y4			0.817	
Z1				0.752
Z2				0.741
Z3				0.712
Z4				0.837
Z5				0.782

Source: Data Processing 2025

4.1.4. Reliability Test Results

Procedures for assessing the accuracy of instruments in generating research data.

Table 5. Reliability Test Results

Indicator	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Sales Orientation	0.862	0.876	0.899	0.641
Customers Orientation	0.848	0.889	0.891	0.622
Sales Force Performance	0.807	0.817	0.874	0.634
Adaptive Sales Behaviour	0.824	0.831	0.876	0.587

Source: Data Processing 2025

Based on Table 5, Sales Orientation (0.862), Customer Orientation (0.848), Sales Force Performance (0.807), and Adaptive Sales Behaviour (0.824) all meet the reliability criteria.

4.1.5. Inner Model Results

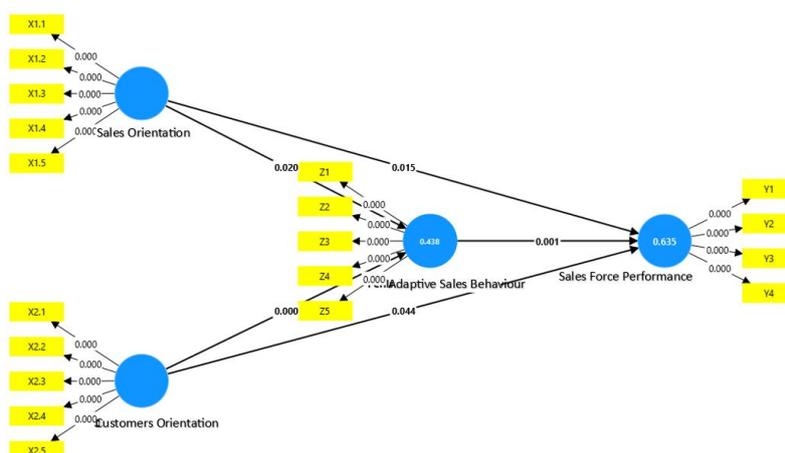


Figure 2. Inner Model Measurement

Source: Data Processing 2025

Based on Figure 2, all relationships between variables show path coefficient values and P-values < 0.05, indicating that all constructs have a significant effect.

4.1.6. R-Square Adjusted

Adjusted R-square value according to the view (Hair et al., 2018) can evaluate how well the model adequately measures the phenomenon.

Table 6. Adjusted R-Square

Indicator	R-square	R-square Adjusted
Adaptive Sales Behaviour	0.438	0.427
Sales Force Performance	0.635	0.624

Source: Data Processing 2025

As indicated in Table 6, adaptive sales behaviour exhibits an R² value of 0.427, denoting a moderate level of explanatory power, whereby sales orientation and customer orientation

collectively account for 42.7% of the variance, while the remaining 57.3% is attributable to exogenous factors beyond the proposed model. Furthermore, sales force performance demonstrates an adjusted R² of 0.624, likewise reflecting moderate explanatory strength, indicating that 62.4% of its variance is explained by sales orientation and customer orientation, while the remaining 37.6% of the variance is caused by variables outside the scope of this study.

4.1.7. Path Coefficient

Path coefficient testing was conducted using bootstrapping to obtain significant values.

Table 7. Path Coefficient

Indicator	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T-statistic (O/STDEV)	P values
Sales Orientation -> Adaptive Sales Behaviour	0.273	0.277	0.117	2.328	0.020
Customer Orientation -> Adaptive Sales Behaviour	0.438	0.443	0.114	3.836	0.000
Adaptive Sales Behaviour -> Sales Force Performance	0.363	0.364	0.109	3.321	0.001
Sales Orientation -> Sales Force Performance	0.290	0.285	0.119	2.431	0.015
Customer Orientation -> Sales Force Performance	0.259	0.267	0.129	2.013	0.044

Source: Data Processing 2025

The results of the path coefficient analysis as in Table 7 confirm all hypothesized direct effects are statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Specifically, both Sales Orientation ($\beta = 0.273$, $p = 0.020$) and Customer Orientation ($\beta = 0.438$, $p = 0.000$) positively influence Adaptive Sales Behaviour, which in turn significantly affects Sales Force Performance ($\beta = 0.363$, $p = 0.001$). Significant direct effects from Sales Orientation ($\beta = 0.290$) and Customer Orientation ($\beta = 0.259$) on Sales Force Performance were also found, suggesting potential partial mediation.

4.2. Discussion

4.2.1. The Influence of Sales Orientation on Adaptive Sales Behaviour

The empirical analysis reveals a positive path coefficient of 0.273 with a p-value of 0.020 ($p < 0.05$), thereby indicating that sales orientation exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on adaptive sales behaviour. This means that salespeople with a high sales orientation, i.e. those who are focused on targets and active in their sales efforts, tend to be better able to adapt the way they offer products to the needs and characteristics of customers. This condition is supported because salespeople are equipped with a service manual, act as consultants who assist customers, and receive reprimands if they are deemed to be pressuring or making customers uncomfortable. This finding is congruent with the empirical evidence reported by Marselinus and Ardyan (2024), which likewise demonstrates that sales orientation exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on adaptive sales behaviour.

4.2.2. The Influence of Customer Orientation on Adaptive Sales Behaviour

The results indicate a positive path coefficient of 0.438 with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$), signifying that customer orientation exerts a positive and statistically significant

influence on adaptive sales behaviour. This finding implies that salespeople who emphasize service quality and the fulfillment of customer needs are more adept at recalibrating their sales strategies in response to varying customer contexts. A strong customer orientation makes salespeople more flexible in adjusting their sales approach, thereby increasing adaptive sales behaviour and making customers feel more satisfied with the service provided. Salespeople who frequently make appointments with customers can interact more intensively, thereby better understanding their needs and adjusting their sales approach more appropriately. The data obtained supports the research results (Harindranath et al., 2019; Hidayati et al., 2017; Kaynak et al., 2016; Zuraida, 2022) which indicate that customer orientation has a positive and significant value on adaptive sales behaviour.

4.2.3. The Effect of Adaptive Sales Behaviour on Sales Force Performance

The empirical results reveal a positive path coefficient of 0.363 with a p-value of 0.001 ($p < 0.05$), indicating that adaptive sales behaviour exerts a positive and statistically significant effect on sales performance. This suggests that salespeople who are capable of tailoring their selling approaches to diverse customer profiles and needs demonstrate greater flexibility, effectiveness, and responsiveness in customer interactions, which ultimately translates into enhanced sales performance. The ability of salespeople to read customer types based on demographic and psychographic characteristics enables them to be more precise in adjusting their communication style and sales strategy. The results of this study show consistency with some research (Amenuvor et al., 2021; Charoensukmongkol & Suthatorn, 2020; Hamdani & Santoso, 2022; Nufuz & Graciafernandy, 2024; Yeo & Jan, 2022; Zhou & Charoensukmongkol, 2020) which indicate that adaptive sales behaviour has a positive and significant value for sales force performance.

4.2.4. The Effect of Sales Orientation on Sales Force Performance

The empirical findings indicate a positive path coefficient of 0.290 with a p-value of 0.015 ($p < 0.05$), demonstrating that sales orientation exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on sales force performance. This means that salespeople who are more sales-oriented and focused on achieving targets, able to highlight product advantages, and use persuasive sales strategies, generally perform better in sales. This is because the greater their ability to achieve targets, acquire new customers, and increase sales results. Salespeople who actively offer test drives, diligently follow up, regularly attend exhibitions, and adhere to standard operating procedures (SOPs) to provide more detailed explanations tend to be more trusted by consumers and achieve more optimal performance. The results of this study are consistent with studies (Adusei et al., 2020; Revan et al., 2025; Rizan & Utama, 2020) which indicate that sales orientation has a positive and significant value on sales force performance.

4.2.5. The Effect of Customer Orientation on Sales Force Performance

The results indicate a positive path coefficient of 0.259 with a p-value of 0.044 ($p < 0.05$), signifying that customer orientation exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on sales performance. This finding suggests that salespeople who exhibit a strong customer-oriented disposition are more effective in cultivating customer relationships, i.e. able to understand customer needs, provide appropriate solutions, and build strong relationships with consumers, have a greater chance of achieving their targets and increasing sales results. Salespeople who receive high service ratings from customers and frequently win the most sales rewards each month generally demonstrate superior performance because their service quality is considered better and more consistent. The data obtained is consistent with the research results (ELSamen & Akroush, 2018; Hamdani & Santoso, 2022; Kuo et al., 2022;

Yeo & Jan, 2022; Zuraida, 2022) which indicate that customer orientation has a positive and significant value on sales force performance.

5. Conclusion

Sales orientation and customer orientation exhibit positive and statistically significant effects on both adaptive sales behavior and sales force performance. Moreover, adaptive sales behavior is empirically validated as a significant and positive determinant of sales force performance among Mitsubishi Xpander sales personnel in Semarang City. These results confirm the existence of new concrete evidence in the context of sales force performance.

The most effective way to improve the performance of Mitsubishi Xpander sales in Semarang City is through strengthening customer orientation and adaptive sales behavior, as these two variables have the highest test results. Strong customer orientation encourages salespeople to understand consumer needs, determine the right solutions, and build more personal relationships. This ability then enhances adaptive sales behavior, whereby salespeople are more flexible in adjusting their communication methods, sales strategies, and sales approaches to suit each customer's characteristics. This leads to the growth of new customers and increased sales results. The combination of these two factors makes the sales process more relevant to customer conditions and more responsive to market situations.

These findings emphasize the importance for companies to consistently strengthen their sales orientation, customer orientation, and develop adaptive sales behavior capabilities in every salesperson, so that sales performance can continue to improve and remain competitive amid the dynamics of customer needs and preferences. These efforts can be carried out through communication and service training, more in-depth product knowledge provision, coaching on effective selling techniques, increased discipline in following SOPs, and performance monitoring that emphasizes a customer-centric approach.

The limitations of this study include a limited research area, a relatively small sample size, and the use of questionnaires that have the potential to cause bias. In future studies, the focus could be on expanding the sample size, diversifying the research area, and adding variables to produce a more comprehensive picture.

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