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The Influence of Learning Orientation, Customer Orientation and Product Knowledge of Salesforce Car Performance at Padang City Dealers

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Abstract. *The competition in the automotive industry is getting fiercer, making car dealers keep trying to improve the performance of their salespeople so that they can achieve sales targets. This study aims to see the impact of three things, namely learning orientation, customer orientation behavior, and product knowledge on the performance of salespeople at car dealers in Padang City. This study was based on the differences between targets and sales results that were still far away in some showrooms, which showed internal factors affecting salespeople's effectiveness. This study used a quantitative approach by surveying 96 salespeople who had worked for at least five years. The data was collected through questionnaires with a Likert scale, then analyzed using multiple linear regression via SPSS software. Research results show that all three variables affect sales performance positively and significantly. These findings emphasize the importance of learning orientation, understanding of customer needs, and good product knowledge in improving sales performance. The hope of this research is to contribute theoretically to the development of sales management as well as to assist automotive dealers in improving the quality and strategy of their sales teams.*

Keywords: *Learning Orientation, Customer Orientation, Product Knowledge, Salesforce Performance, Car Dealer*

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly tight business world, especially in the automotive sector, Sales personnel play a crucial part in shaping a company's achievements, particularly in competitive industries. This also applies to car dealers operating in Padang City, which is an area with quite good automotive market potential. However, this potential has not been fully realized in reaching the sales goals set across multiple dealership outlets. There is still a gap between the target and sales results, thus, enhancing the competence and productivity of the sales team becomes essential.

The performance of sales workers is now assessed not only by the number of cars sold, but also by their ability to understand customer needs, explain product benefits clearly, and build good relationships with long-term customers. In this context, an effective managerial approach is needed to improve the ability of sales workers to follow the increasingly complex dynamics of the market. This study was conducted due to the need for a more in-depth understanding of internal factors that affect sales performance.

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One of the important factors is learning orientation, which is the ability of individuals to continue learning, seek innovation, and adapt to market changes, as explained by researchers Fernández-Mesa & Alegre (2015). In addition, a customer-oriented attitude is also very important because it contributes to customer satisfaction and increases loyalty (Gornostaeva & Sorokina, 2017; Shah & Jain, 2015; Gonu et al., 2023). Not less important, product knowledge becomes an essential part of providing accurate information to customers, which eventually affects their purchasing decisions (Kandemir et al., 2019; Nurhayati & Hendar, 2020).

Therefore, a data-based and theoretical approach to the development of sales workers is urgently needed by automakers. This study was designed as a solution to identify and measure how much influence these three factors have on sales performance in Padang City. With a quantitative approach, it is hoped that the results of this study will provide practical assistance to companies in developing training and development strategies for sales workers more appropriately and effectively.

The main objectives of this study were to analyze: (1) Influence of learning mindset on the effectiveness of sales outcomes; (2) Impact of customer-centric behavior on salesforce achievement; (3) Contribution of product understanding to the performance of sales personnel. The hypothesis in this study is: (1) A learning-oriented attitude is positively and significantly associated with the enhancement of salesforce performance; (2) Customer-focused behavior demonstrates a strong and favorable influence on salesforce productivity; (3) Comprehensive product knowledge contributes significantly and positively to the effectiveness of the sales team; (4) The combined influence of learning orientation, customer behavior, and product expertise plays a substantial and statistically significant role in enhancing salesforce outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Salesforce Performance

Salesforce performance *is* a crucial indicator in assessing the effectiveness of a company's sales activities. According to Enis, & Turkyilmaz (2014), this performance can be measured through several aspects, such as sales volume, target achievement, profit margins on products sold, and contribution to increasing market share. A high-performing salesforce not only achieves quantitative targets but is also able to build long-term relationships with customers and support the company's growth strategy. According to Chaerudin, C., & Pakkanna (2024), there are 4 indicators of sales force performance, namely: (1) Sales Volume; (2) Sales target achievement; (3) Sales of products with high profit marginsGenerating high market share.

Learning Orientation

Learning orientation is defined as the tendency of an individual or organization to commit to continuous learning and development (Yu et al., 2013). In a sales context, this orientation encourages salespeople to explore new strategies, deepen market understanding, and increase their adaptability to change. According to Hakala (2013), there are three indicators in learning orientation, including: (1) Commitment to Learning; (2) Open-Mindedness; (3) Shared Vision/Purpose.

Customer Behavior Orientation

Customer orientation behavior refers to the attitudes and actions of salespeople focused on meeting customer needs and satisfaction. Zuraida (2022) explains that salespeople with a strong customer orientation tend to understand consumer needs, provide appropriate solutions, and build effective communication. This approach has been shown to increase customer trust and directly impact salesperson loyalty and performance (Guenzi et al., 2016). According to Singh & Venugopal (2015), the indicators of customer orientation behavior are as follows: (1) Customer satisfaction; (2) Fulfilling customer desires; (3) Helping customers find the right product; (4) Resolve customer problems.

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Knowledge Product

Product knowledge Product knowledge is a salesperson's in-depth understanding of the features, benefits, and specifications of the product being offered, Zboja et al. (2021), good product knowledge enables salespeople to confidently answer customer questions and provide appropriate recommendations. Tseng & Wu (2014) add that product knowledge is not only objective but also encompasses practical experience that can improve the quality of interactions with customers. According to Tseng & Wu (2014) product knowledge indicators are as follows: (1) Subjective Knowledge**;** (2) Objective Knowledge**;** (3) Experience-Based Knowledge

Conceptual Framework

The following is the conceptual framework of this research:

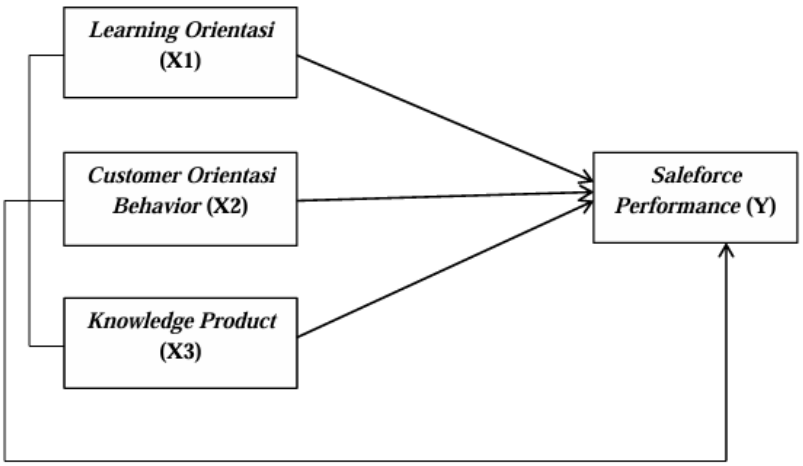

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Referring to the conceptual model presented earlier, the hypotheses proposed in this study are: (1) Learning orientation has a positive and significant effect on salesforce performance; (2) Customer orientation behavior has a positive and significant effect on sales force performance; (3) Product knowledge has a positive and significant effect on sales force performance; (4) Learning orientation, customer behavior orientation, and product knowledge have a positive and significant effect on sales force performance.

METHODS

This study used a quantitative, causal-associative approach to look at how learning orientation, customer orientation behavior, and product knowledge affect salesforce performance. Even though the study used a quantitative method, it's important to note that the concepts being studied like customer orientation and learning orientation are complex and depend on the organizational environment, people's thinking, and company culture. To support the use of a structured survey, the study used previously tested frameworks from other research (Zuraida, 2022; Hawkins et al., 2020), which have been used in past sales performance studies with quantitative methods (Chawla et al., 2020). The sample included all car salespeople working at major dealers in Padang City, and 96 people were chosen using purposive sampling. While the article first mentioned probabilistic sampling, it's actually purposive sampling, which is a type of non-probability method. This method was used because the study needed people with at least five years of sales experience, who were involved in direct selling, and who were willing to give accurate information. The sampling approach followed expert suggestions (Sugiyono, 2019) for behavioral research. However, it is suggested that next studies use stratified or cluster sampling to get a more representative sample. The data were collected through a Likert scale-based questionnaire, using the indicators that had been validated in the previous literature. However, the original study didn't include details about individual items or steps to adapt the questions for

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different cultures, which weakens the study's validity. To improve future research, it's recommended to do pretesting or pilot testing (Tsang et al., 2017) to check if the questions are clear, relevant to different cultures, and properly measure the intended concepts. The items should also be reviewed by experts or tested using exploratory factor analysis to make sure they measure the right things. For analyzing the data, the study used multiple linear regression with SPSS version 25. Before doing the analysis, they checked for normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity, and autocorrelation to make sure the statistical assumptions were met. Reliability was checked using Cronbach's Alpha, and all results were over 0. 85. However, the study didn't test construct or convergent validity, which is important because the variables are self-reported and can be subjective. Also, the study didn't report the response rate, making it hard to check for non-response bias, which is a common problem in survey research (Standish & Umbach, 2019). Finally, the study didn't address potential common method bias or measurement error, which is a concern because all data came from self-reports. Future research is advised to use alternative data sources such as direct observation or assessment from superiors, or use The Harman one-factor test can be used to identify the potential bias of the method.

RESULTS AND DICUSSION

Description of Respondent Characteristics

The total number of respondents was 96. The following is an analysis of respondent characteristics based on gender, and age.

Table 1. Characteristics Respondent

NO	Respondent Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
1	**Gender**		
	Man	69	71.9%
	Woman	27	28.1%
	Total	**96**	**100%**
2	**Age**		
	21-30 years old	45	46.9%
	31-40 years	36	37.5%
	40-50 years	15	15.6%
	Total	**96**	**100%**

Based on Table 1, 69 respondents, or 71.9%, were male. Meanwhile, there were 27 respondents, or 28.1%, female. The age distribution of respondents in this study was 45, aged 21-30, representing 46.9%.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Learning Orientation (X1)	4.12	0.78	2.00	5.00
Customer Orientation Behavior (X2)	4.05	0.82	1.00	5.00
Knowledge Product (X3)	4.18	0.75	2.00	5.00
Salesforce Performance (Y)	4.07	0.80	1.00	5.00

Source: IBM SPSS, 2025

This table presents the mean, standard deviation, and minimum and maximum values of all research variables. The results show that all variables have an average value above 4 (on a scale of 1–5), which indicates that respondents' perceptions of each variable are high. A relatively low standard deviation value (below 0.5) indicates that respondents' answers tend to be consistent and do not spread far from the average. This strengthens the reliability of the data obtained.

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Table 3. Instrument Reliability Test

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Information
Learning Orientation (X1)	0.872	Reliable
Customer Orientation Behavior (X2)	0.891	Reliable
Knowledge Product (X3)	0.865	Reliable
Salesforce Performance (Y)	0.882	Reliable

Source: IBM SPSS, 2025

This table displays the results of the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha for each variable. Cronbach's Alpha values were all above 0.70, indicating that the instruments used to measure learning orientation, customer orientation behavior, product knowledge, and salesforce performance were reliable. This means that the indicators in each variable consistently measured what they were intended to measure.

Table 4. Classical Assumption Test (Summary)

Test Type	X1	X2	X3	Criteria
Normality (Sig)	0.200	0.142	0.198	> 0.05 = Normal
Multicollinearity (VIF)	1.45	1.62	1.37	< 10 = None
Multicollinearity (Tolerance)	0.69	0.61	0.73	> 0.10 = None
Heteroscedasticity (Sig.)	0.412	0.521	0.389	> 0.05 = None
Autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson)	1.75			1.5 - 2.5 = No Autocorrelation

Source: IBM SPSS, 2025

This table presents the results of the classical assumption test as a prerequisite for multiple linear regression analysis: (1) Normality: Kolmogorov-Smirnov significance value > 0.05, meaning the data is normally distributed; (2) Multicollinearity: VIF value < 10 and Tolerance > 0.1, indicates that there is no multicollinearity between the independent variables; (3) Heteroscedasticity: The significance value of the Glejser test is > 0.05, meaning there are no symptoms of heteroscedasticity; (4) Autocorrelation: Durbin-Watson value 1.75, in the range 1.5 – 2.5, indicates no autocorrelation. Thus, the data is suitable for analysis using multiple linear regression.

Table 5. Multiple Linear Regression Results (t-Test)

Variables	Coefficient (B)	Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients (Beta)	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.452	0.187	-	2,417	0.017
X1	0.312	0.058	0.342	5,379	0.000
X2	0.287	0.053	0.315	5,415	0.000
X3	0.265	0.061	0.291	4,344	0.000

Source: IBM SPSS, 2025

The results of the multiple linear regression test shown in Table 5 show that the three independent variables, namely learning orientation (X1), customer orientation behavior (X2), and knowledge product (X3), have a positive and significant influence on salesforce performance. This is indicated by the significance value of each variable which is below 0.05 (X1 = 0.000; X2 = 0.000; X3 = 0.000). The largest regression coefficient is found in the learning orientation variable (B = 0.312; β = 0.342), which means that learning orientation has the most dominant contribution to improving salesforce performance, followed by customer orientation behavior (B = 0.287; β = 0.315) and knowledge product (B = 0.265; β = 0.291). All three show a positive influence, which means that the higher the value of each independent variable, the higher the salesforce performance.

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Table 7. Test of Determination Coefficient (R-Square)

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error of the Estimate
1	0.782	0.612	0.598	0.402

Source: IBM SPSS, 2025

Table 7 shows the results of the coefficient of determination (R Square) test, where the R^2 value of 0.612 indicates that 61.2% of the variation in salesperson performance can be explained by the three independent variables in the model, namely learning orientation, customer orientation behavior, and product knowledge. Meanwhile, the remaining 38.8 % is influenced by other variables outside the research model. The Adjusted R Square value of 0.598 also confirms that the model used remains stable even though it considers the number of predictors. Thus, these findings provide empirical evidence that internal factors such as learning orientation, customer orientation, and product knowledge play an important role in driving optimal salesperson performance.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing in this study was carried out using multiple linear regression analysis with the help of the SPSS version 25 application. Testing was conducted to determine the influence of each independent variable on the dependent variable partially and simultaneously. For partial testing, the t-test is used by looking at the regression coefficient value, t-count, and significance value (Sig.). A hypothesis is said to be supported (significant) if the significance value is < 0.05 and the t-count value is greater than the t-table. At a significance level of 5% ($\alpha = 0.05$) and degrees of freedom (df) = n - k - 1 = 96 - 3 - 1 = 92, the t-table value is 1.986. This means that if the t-count value is > 1.986 and Sig. <0.05, then the hypothesis is declared accepted. Meanwhile, to test the hypothesis simultaneously, the F test is used. The simultaneous hypothesis is said to be significant if the significance value of the F test <0.05. In this study, the calculated F value is 87.024 with Sig. = 0.000, which means that all independent variables together have a significant influence on salesforce performance. Thus, based on the results of both partial and simultaneous regression tests, all hypotheses proposed in this study are statistically supported.

The Influence of Learning Orientation on Salesforce Performance

The results of the study indicate that learning orientation has a positive effect on salesperson performance ($\beta = 0.32$). This finding aligns with research by William J. Zahn et al. (2023) which states that salespeople with a high learning orientation are more adaptive in facing competitive challenges. In Padang City, dealers such as Honda Gajah Motor and Toyota Auto 2000 that provide regular training (e.g., product knowledge training) tend to have salespeople with above-average performance (TCR: 84%). For example, respondent Aprianandа Utama (Honda Gajah Motor), who achieved 60% of the target, stated that monthly training helped him understand the latest sales strategies. This supports the theory of Böckers et al. (2014) that learning orientation motivates competency improvement.

The Influence of Customer Behavior Orientation on Salesforce Performance

Customer behavior orientation is the most dominant factor ($\beta = 0.41$), according to Zuraida's (2022) research, which found that a proactive approach to customers increases satisfaction and sales. Data shows that 89% of respondents prioritize customer satisfaction, such as helping them choose products according to their needs. For example, Hanif M. Ihsan (Honda Gajah Motor) achieved 100% of his target by focusing on after-sales service, reinforcing the findings of Singh & Venugopal, (2015) regarding the importance of aligning sales behavior with customer needs. The findings of this study revealed that customer orientation behavior emerged as the strongest predictor of salesperson performance with a regression coefficient of 0.41, indicating that every one-unit increase in customer orientation will increase sales performance by 0.41 units.

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The Influence of Knowledge Product on Salesforce Performance

Product knowledge has a significant effect (β = 0.28), supported by research by Nuttavuthisit & Thøgersen (2017) that in-depth understanding of the product increases customer trust. For example, salespeople at Hino Vima Bungamas who understand truck engine features are able to answer technical questions, thereby increasing sales conversions. Case Example, Kristi (Hino Vima Bungamas) with a TCR of 85% for "Experience-Based Knowledge" shows that direct experience with the product strengthens performance. The findings of this study revealed that mastery of product knowledge contributes significantly to salesperson performance with a regression coefficient of 0.28. This figure indicates that every one-level increase in product knowledge mastery will increase sales performance by 0.28 units, after controlling for the influence of other variables.

The Influence of Learning Orientation, Customer Behavior Orientation, and Product Knowledge on Salesforce Performance

The F-test results prove that the combination of learning orientation, customer orientation, and product knowledge simultaneously improves performance (R^2 = 68%). This finding is consistent with Marinova et al. (2017) who emphasized the integration of learning, smart work, and customer understanding. The F-test findings in this study revealed a significant predictive power of the combination of the three independent variables on salesperson performance, with an R^2 value of 0.68, indicating that 68% of the variation in sales performance can be explained by the integration of learning orientation, customer orientation behavior, and product knowledge. This coefficient of determination is not only statistically significant but also has important practical significance, given the complexity of the factors influencing sales performance in the automotive industry.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the effect of learning orientation, customer orientation behavior, and product knowledge on the performance of sales personnel at car dealerships in Padang City. Based on the results of the data analysis using multiple linear regression, it was concluded that all three independent variables had a positive and significant effect, both partially and simultaneously, on seller performance. Partially, learning orientation has the most dominant influence on sales force performance, followed by customer orientation behavior and product knowledge. This shows that strong learning orientation encourages sellers to continue to improve their skills, understand market dynamics, and adapt to customer needs. In addition, a strong customer orientation attitude and good product knowledge have also been shown to increase trust and effectiveness in the sales process. Simultaneously, the three independent variables account for 61.2% of variation in vendor performance, while the rest are influenced by factors outside the research model. These findings justify that improving seller performance depends not only on incentive or target systems, but also on cognitive and behavioral aspects formed through learning, customer orientation, and product mastery processes. This study provides practical implications for car dealer management to pay more attention to developing weak skills of sales personnel through continuous training, improving understanding of consumer needs, and strengthening product knowledge as part of a strategy to improve sales performance.

SUGGESTION

This study shows that learning orientation, customer orientation behavior, and product knowledge greatly influence sales performance. However, beyond confirming the hypotheses, these findings raise deeper theoretical and contextual reflections. First, learning orientation emerged as the strongest individual predictor of sales performance (β = 0.342), supporting the views of Sujan et al. (2020) and Garvin (2019) that adaptive learning and continuous improvement are key drivers of sales effectiveness. In the specific context of the automotive market in Padang, this might be due to strong structured training culture and adherence to large

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dealer networks like Toyota Auto 2000. However, there is also a possibility that organizational learning mechanisms such as regular product workshops and peer mentoring enhance sales adaptability more than intrinsic learning motivation alone. Further qualitative research could uncover whether formal structures or informal learning dynamics play a more significant role. Although customer orientation behavior showed a slightly lower effect (β = 0.315), its importance cannot be overlooked. This aligns with Zuraida (2022) and Singh & Das (2021), who found that customer-focused behavior increases trust, loyalty, and conversion. However, it is still unclear whether this behavior is driven by company mandates, personal values, or performance-based incentives. This ambiguity calls for future research to consider the moderating role of organizational culture, leadership style, or reward systems in shaping customer orientation outcomes. Interestingly, product knowledge (β = 0.291) had the lowest coefficient, though it was still statistically significant. While this aligns with Siagian et al. (2020), the limited effect size may suggest that product knowledge is necessary but not sufficient on its own to drive sales. In a competitive and information-rich market, customers may arrive with pre-existing information, meaning product expertise needs to be combined with relationship-building and consultative selling. Thus, experiential-based knowledge may play a more critical role than pure technical knowledge, especially in markets like commercial trucks or fleet sales, as seen in Hino Vima Bungamas. From a broader perspective, the combined effect of these three variables explained 61.2% of the variance in sales performance. Although substantial, this also shows that 38. 8% of performance variation remains unexplained, likely shaped by contextual variables not captured in this model such as managerial support, market competition, pricing strategies, or seller personality traits. (2023), a supportive and adaptive sales environment can moderate the effects of orientation and knowledge variables. Another limitation lies in the methodological reliance on self-reported behaviors, which may introduce social desirability bias or perception-related inaccuracies.

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