

**The concept of perceived quota difficulty and its relevance to ethical decision making and
sales performance**

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Abstract

This conceptual paper uses self-efficacy theory and draws upon the concept of task difficulty to define the construct of perceived quota difficulty and its relevance to ethical decision making and sales performance in the domain of sales. It is proposed that moral judgment, a precursor to ethical behavior positively impacts sales performance. Two dimension of salesperson performance – outcome and behavior performance are discussed and impact on each is highlighted. It is further proposed that a salesperson’s perceived quota difficulty plays a moderating role in the relationship between moral judgment and salesperson performance. A pilot study was conducted with 46 salespeople working in various companies located in Newfoundland and Labrador province of Canada. The measures were found to be reliable and the use of the measures for future empirical work is recommended. The implication of the proposed relationships to sales managers and organizations are presented. Limitations, future direction, and conclusion have been outlined.

Keywords: Sales ethics, Perceived quota difficulty, Sales performance, Self-efficacy, Ethical decision making

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Introduction

Sales are a fundamental aspect of any successful business and vital to firm survival (Guenzi et al., 2016). On the surface, it may look like salespeople's work is limited to making sales pitches of products/services to potential customers and generating sales revenue. However, the selling function involves so much more, including the complex role of constantly meeting sales goals, building customer relationships, representing the company's interests while managing customer needs in highly competitive markets (Schwepker & Good, 2017). Salespeople work in a relatively unsupervised environment; they are primarily responsible for the larger part of customer acquisition and retention (Agnihotri & Krush, 2015) and are often evaluated on the basis of short-term objectives, such as sales quota (Futrell, 2002). Since salespeople are constantly trying to meet the sales goals and simultaneously represent multiple interests, they are exposed to greater ethical dilemmas.

One well-documented example of such a situation is the cross-selling scandal of Wells Fargo Bank in 2016. Sales representatives unethically opened two million deposit accounts and credit cards without customer knowledge in order to meet their daily cross-selling targets (Tayan, 2019). Clearly, the immense pressure of meeting the targets motivated sales representatives to take unethical actions. Although the senior management later asserted that these actions were not indicative of the broader culture of the bank, the damage was already done as the news spread like wildfire. With the advancement of technology and globalization, the reputational damage caused by ethical misconduct can be massive and detrimental to a company's revenue and long-term survival. Numerous studies suggest that a salesperson's ethical and unethical behavior plays an important role in the creation and maintenance or depletion of trust, loyalty, and long-term buyer-seller relationship (e.g., Chen & Mau, 2009; Pezhman et al., 2013; Roman, 2003). Given

the importance of ethical behavior in building a relationship and making sales, it is crucial to understand variables that may impact ethical decision-making and performance.

The purpose of this conceptual paper is to shed light on the relevance of salesperson's cognitive aspects – moral judgment, sales self-efficacy, and perceived quota difficulty in ethical decision making and their sales performance. First, the discussion in this paper provides clarity to the definition and conceptualization of perceived quota difficulty. Despite a tremendous focus on sales quota in the sales literature, studies have not focused on how and why salespeople may experience the same quota differently. By drawing upon the popular concept of subjective vs. objective task difficulty in behavior research, this study distinguishes objective vs. perceived quota difficulty. In addition, the relationship between a cognitive variable- self-efficacy and perceived quota difficulty is utilized to explain how a salesperson perceived quota difficulty may form.

Second, although numerous studies highlight the positive impact of moral judgment on ethical behavior and performance, they do not take into account how a salesperson's view of their tasks may moderate this relationship. In this paper, perceived quota difficulty is underscored as a factor that moderates the positive relationship between moral judgment and performance in explaining that high moral judgment may not always lead to higher performance.

The structure of the paper is as follows- the literature review and proposition development section briefly review the past studies in sales ethics and highlights some of the important changes in the literature. Next, perceived quota difficulty is distinguished from objective quota difficulty and the relationship between self-efficacy and perceived quota difficulty is discussed to explain how a salesperson's perceived quota difficulty may form. Then, the relationships among moral judgment, perceived quota difficulty, and sales performance are

discussed, and testable propositions are advanced. The conceptual paper is then extended to an exploratory pilot study to introduce measures for empirically testing the relationships in the future and to conduct a preliminary correlation analysis. The methodology section discusses the pilot study and the assessment of the measures. A survey instrument was assembled utilizing the scales used in past research in the sales and marketing domain. A pilot study was conducted in a small sample of salespeople in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada. The reliability of the measures is reported providing the initial support to the use of the measures. A preliminary correlation analysis was conducted, and some significant correlations between the variables of interest are highlighted. The fifth section highlights the implications of the proposed relationships for sales managers and organizations. The final two sections focus on limitations and directions for future research.

Literature review and Proposition development

This chapter begins with a brief introduction of ethics in general and personal selling and highlights some of the important changes in sales ethics research in recent decades. First, an introduction to and review of moral judgment and sales performance literature is presented leading to the development of Proposition 1. The next section focuses on conceptualizing perceived quota difficulty and distinguishing the construct from objective quota difficulty. Then, the relationship between perceived quota difficulty and self-efficacy is discussed to explain how perceived quota difficulty may form. Finally, the moderating effect of perceived quota difficulty on moral judgment—performance relationship is discussed for the development of Proposition 1a.

Ethics

Ethics, a branch of moral philosophy, is a system of moral judgments, standards, and rules of conduct that governs human behavior and determines what is right or wrong (Bartels, 1967). These judgments are based on the degree to which the behavior is considered right versus wrong, good versus evil, or fair versus unfair (Hunt & Vitell, 1986). An action born out of these judgments that is both legally and morally acceptable to the larger community is called an ethical behavior (Jones, 1991).

Ethics have been studied in virtually every domain of research such as medicine, law, politics, leadership, economics, psychology, education, government, business, and management. Different disciplines, institutions and professions have their own definition of ethics based on their aims and goals. For example, ethics norms in medicine consist of respect for patient's autonomy and beneficence (Worrall, 2008) while ethics in business focuses on welfare of the stakeholders. Although the specific definition may vary across different domains, the broader field of ethics is concerned with doing the right thing for the greater good of everyone.

Research in ethics have gained extreme popularity over the past few decades, especially in the field of clinical studies (Jones et al., 2019), social responsibility (Vitell, 2015), scientific integrity (Kretser et al, 2019) and organizational behavior (Trevino et al., 2006). Much research in organizational context have studied the role of ethics in goal achievement (Schweitzer et al., 2004), perceptions of organizations' ethical climate (Elçi & Alpan, 2009), relationship with colleagues (Treviño et al., 1998), social networks in the workplace (Brass et al., 1998), and leadership (Treviño & Brown, 2004; Brown et al., 2005). Studies have found that organizational ethical values are positively related with job satisfaction among healthcare, administrative, sales and marketing employees (e.g., Valentine et al., 2011; Koh & El'Fred, 2001; Vitell &

Singhapakdi, 2008).). Given its positive influence on multiple organizational aspects, researchers suggest that sales managers should create work cultures that encourage ethical practices. In the field of management, role of ethics has also been examined across the areas such as accounting (Bampton & Cowton, 2002), information systems (Smith, 2002; Davison, 2007), finance (Cagle & Baucus, 2006; Melé et al.,2017), and many more.

In the 1980s, marketing research saw the rise in number of studies devoted to examining ethics in marketing as many businesses were facing ethical dilemmas while using marketing techniques (Leigh & Murphy, 1999, as cited in Murphy, 2002). At the time, majority of studies focused on building theoretical and empirical foundation such as developing ethical decision-making models, marketing theories and frameworks (Murphy, 2002). In the 1990s, scholarly attention in marketing journals on ethics was sustained by ethical issues concerning consumers (Schlegelmilch & Öberseder, 2010) such as deceptive pricing, deceptive advertising or bribery and exploitation of consumer weaknesses. The focus of marketing ethics did not change all that much in the 2000s, as many studies focused on advancing the knowledge on ethical issues related to consumers and refining ethical decision-making models. In the recent years with the rise of internet and technology, a new theme – internet marketing has emerged in marketing ethics (Schlegelmilch & Öberseder, 2010). This growing interest in internet marketing ethics is justified, given the increasing number of businesses operating online.

Ethics in Personal Selling

In the 1980s, around the same time when marketing ethics was gaining popularity, sales-related themes also started emerging, as measured by the number of publications and citations (Schlegelmilch & Öberseder, 2010). Early sales ethics research focused mostly on descriptive and comparative works such as cross-group comparison of product and service salespeople

(Dubinsky et al., 1985), sales managers (Chonko & Burnett, 1983), and retail agents (Dubinsky & Levy, 1985). The rise of ethical decision-making models in marketing in the mid 1980s (e.g., Ferrell & Gresham, 1985; Hunt & Vitell, 1986; Trevino, 1986), provided a new direction for sales researchers. Then, in the 1990s, major thrust in sales ethics research was devoted towards investigating organizational and individual impacts on ethical decision making. Extensive research indicates that organizational factors such as ethical climate, corporate code of ethics, sales role and environment, supervisory style and leadership impact an individual's ethical decision making (Ferrell et al., 2019). For example, Maignan and Ferrell (2004) found that organization's ethical culture cultivates the behavior needed to solve ethical conflicts within the organization. Likewise, Weeks & Nantel (1992) demonstrated that a well communicated corporate code of ethics results in ethical sales force behavior. When salespeople's and organization's ethical values aligned, salespeople were found to be more customer focused (Schwepker & Schultz, 2015). On the contrary lack of ethical culture and organizational support has been found to drive ethical conflicts. For example, organizational factors such as an isolated work environment, low supervision, and reduced peer influence provide an opportunity for salespeople to engage in unethical activities for individual motives (Wotruba, 1990).

In terms of individual factors, the influence of factors such as age, gender, education, ethical values, personality traits, empathy, and so forth in ethical decision-making has been studied. However, only a few of the individual factors have been found to have a remarkable effect on salespeople's ethical behaviors. For example, Agnihotri and Krush (2015) demonstrated that a salesperson's empathy has direct positive effect on their ethical behaviors. Singhapakdi and Vitell (1990) found that machiavellianism influenced many aspects of ethical behaviors. Machiavellian marketers appeared to be reluctant to punish unethical actions and high

machiavellian marketers considered ethical problems as less serious than low machiavellian marketers. Among many factors related to the individual, an individual's personal ethical values have been found to have the greatest impact on their ethical decision making (e.g., Schwepker & Ingram, 1996; Schwepker & Good, 2011; Wotruba, 1990). Factors like age, gender, and job tenure, on the other hand, have not been found to have noteworthy effect on ethical decision making (Ferrell et al., 2019).

As discussed in the introduction section, salesperson's ethical conflicts are inevitable as they must balance the interest of all involved stakeholders (Schwepker & Good, 2011). In personal selling, a salesperson's ethical behavior is a behavior that promotes the welfare of the customer (Roman & Ruiz, 2005) and has been measured in a range of ways such as honesty, full disclosure, and fair play (Robertson & Anderson, 1993). Salespeople who behave ethically are factual in their communication, treat every customer fairly, promise what can be delivered (Hansen & Riggle, 2009). Unethical sales behavior, on the other hand, is conduct that enables salespeople to benefit at the expense of the customer/company (Dubinsky et al., 1992). Some of the examples include overselling, over-promising, selling inessential products, and implementing manipulative influence tactics or high-pressure selling techniques (Hansen & Riggle, 2009; Schwepker & Good, 2011). Although ethical/unethical sales behavior is a highly elusive construct and are situation specific (Lagace et al., 1991), in this study, behavior which is done to gain at the expense of the customer is defined as unethical, and the behavior that puts the customer first and enhances customer satisfaction, trust, and commitment is defined as ethical.

Moral Judgment

Schwepker and Good (2010) define moral judgment as "an individual's decision as to whether something is considered right or wrong, ethical or unethical". Moral judgment is

considered to be an antecedent of ethical behavior (Wotruba, 1990) that serves as a basis for ethical decision making. Most ethical decision-making models (e.g., Jones, 1991; Trevino, 1986; Hunt & Vitell, 1986; Ferrell & Gresham, 1985) suggest that higher moral values and judgments lead to ethical decisions.

Moral judgements are based on moral philosophies that provide meaning and justification to these judgments (Reidenbach & Robin, 1988). Five different forms of moral philosophy (relativism, deontology, utilitarianism, ethical egoism, and principal of justice) dominate the ethical decision-making literature. According to relativism, moral value is a function of one's culture and innate attributes (Reidenbach & Robin, 1990). What is morally right to one may not be morally right to another person, as different culture evaluates moral standards differently around the world and the assessment of right/wrong is relative to the perspective of the observer (Reidenbach et al., 1991). Deontology suggest that individuals have responsibilities to satisfy the needs of others because it is the right thing to do (Reidenbach & Robin, 1990). Under this philosophy, whether the action is right or wrong is based on the set of rules rather than on the consequences of the actions. Utilitarianism suggests that individuals should act to produce the greatest possible ratio of good to evil (Reidenbach et al., 1991). Actions that produce greater utility to the society are considered morally right whereas actions that causes unhappiness or harm are considered morally wrong. Justice theory holds that people should be equitable and fair. Ethical egoism advocates that people should protect their self-interest first (Reidenbach et al., 1991). Reidenbach and Robin (1988) suggest that each philosophy takes a different approach to explaining what is right or wrong, ethical, or unethical.

Each moral judgment takes on the different forms of moral philosophy to form an opinion or judgement. People use more than one philosophy/ justification in making moral judgments

and each justification depends on the context (Reidenbach & Robin, 1990). In sales context as well, salespeople's moral judgment has been found to differ based on the moral philosophy they draw from. Previous work in sales has found that more relativistic sales managers judge controversial sales practices as less ethical than their less relativistic counterparts (e.g., Sivadas et al., 2003). Forsyth (1992) indicated that sales managers who believed in the greater good of everyone, high on deontology and justice, known as idealists, judged unethical sales practices as more unethical as compared to the less idealist managers. Similarly, Hunt and Vasquez-Parraga's (1993) findings suggest that managers' evaluations of the behavior of salespeople were guided primarily by the deontological considerations (is the behavior right and does it satisfy the needs of others) and only secondarily by the consequences of the behaviors on organization. Thus, people's moral judgment is determined by the type of moral philosophy they draw upon.

The sales research community has extensively explored moral judgments and have found that salespeople who have high moral judgments display ethical behavior (Schwepker & Ingram, 1996; Schwepker & Good, 1999). The general consensus in sales is that ethical selling behavior is desirable (Cadogan et al., 2009) because of the influence ethical behavior has on sales performance, company reputation and revenue. Therefore, moral judgment which leads to ethical behavior is considered to be an important variable of study in sales setting.

Sales performance

Research on sales performance dates back more than a century ago to the work of Oschrein (1918), the first known paper published in personal selling (Plank & Reid, 1994). Since then, thousands of studies on sales performance have been conducted, investigating its dimensions, components, determinants, and consequences. As sales performance shapes

motivation, promotion, pay, turnover, and termination decisions of salespeople (Mackenzie et al., 1993) and the overall organizational performance (Schultz & Good, 2000), understanding the variables that affect a salesperson's sales performance is extremely important.

Sales performance is often described in the sales literature as the quality and quantity of sales closed in a specific period. In the early 1980s when numerous studies were devoted to investigating sales performance, Churchill et al., (1985) suggested that sales performance is a multidimensional construct and single variable measure such as sales volume do not accurately represent a salesperson's sales performance. Two years later, Anderson and Oliver (1987) presented a new behavior vs outcome taxonomy and conceptualized salesperson performance as the combination of what they produce (i.e., sales outcomes) and how they produce it (i.e., sales behavior). Sales performance measures that include both outcome and behavior elements provide a holistic view of salesperson performance (Chonko et al, 2000). Evans et al. (2012) advise that modern sales practices should consider different substantive sales performance achievements. In line with Evans et al (2012) and Chonko et al (2000) view of sales performance, this study focuses on both behavioral and outcome sales performances. Furthermore, in this study, sales performance refers to the performance of an individual salesperson.

Salesperson outcome performance

The primary purpose of any sales organization is to make profits through sales. An outcome-based performance focuses on outputs that can be measured objectively (e.g., dollar sales, profit, sales revenue, and market share.). Outcome performance can be largely attributed to the performer which helps provide compensation and incentive (Babakus et al., 1996). Sales unit volume and dollar sales criterion are the most popular measures in outcome performance. Other

widely used indices are gross margin, net margin (sales minus the cost of the salesperson), and the sales expense or cost/sales ratio (Oliver & Anderson, 1994).

Salesperson behavior performance

Behavior performance is concerned with various skills and activities that a salesperson utilizes when carrying out their job responsibilities. It focuses on the inputs of the salesperson on their sales tasks. Salespeople have more control over their behavioral performance than outcome performance (Baldauf & Cravens, 2002); therefore, measuring this performance dimension is necessary as it helps in identifying salespeople who possess the right skills and exert greater effort into their work. The activities that comprise behavior performance include the use of technical knowledge, adaptive selling, teamwork, making sales presentations, sales planning, and sales support (Babakus et al., 1996; Anderson & Oliver, 1987; Oliver & Anderson, 1994). Some activities might lead to direct sales (e.g., using technical knowledge), while other activities are not directly related to generating sales (e.g., relationship building).

Past studies have shown a positive relationship between a salesperson's outcome and behavior performance (Babakus et al., 1996; Baldauf & Cravens, 2002). This suggests that when behavioral activities are performed well (e.g., sales planning and sales presentations), it should lead to higher outcome performance as well.

Relationship between Moral Judgment and Sales performance

Moral judgment is an individual's personal belief that influences one's behavior (the behavior which is under the person's control). It would be unreasonable to suggest that one's moral judgment can directly influence outcomes (such as generating sales), which is under the other party's (customer) control. Therefore, it is difficult to provide a direct connection between a salesperson's moral judgment and their sales outcome performance. However, low moral

judgment, which leads to unethical behavior, has been found to influence outcome performance. In the sales context, some unethical behavior such as over-selling, over-exaggerating, providing misleading information, and so forth can produce sales results. The example of the Wells Fargo Bank Scandal (2016) provides support to this claim. From 2002- 2016, sales employees at Wells Fargo were exceeding sales targets using unethical activities. This shows the positive association between low moral judgment and outcome performance.

Similarly, a review study in sales by Badaracco and Webb (1995) found that managements warn new sales managers against being ethical as it might hurt their chances of performing well. Few of the older studies offer a similar idea that links unethical behavior to higher performance (e.g., Brenner & Molander, 1977; Vitell & Festervand,1987). For instance, Vitell and Festervand (1987), from their survey, gathered that executives facing ethical dilemmas are forced to choose the unethical option as it provides higher chances of achieving sales. Similarly, they explained that some executives of smaller firms might find it necessary to adopt unethical practices to compete with their larger counterparts. In a similar vein, Dubinsky et al. (1992) suggested that salespeople may participate in unethical behavior because they believe it improves their chances of making sales. Based on the evidence, one might suggest that low moral judgment should lead to high outcome performance through unethical decision-making. However, one important point to note is that although some forms of unethical behavior (manipulative influence tactics or high-pressure selling techniques) may result in sales, they are usually short-lived. This is because unethical behavior leads to customer dissatisfaction and poor word-of-mouth (Burnett et al., 2008); as a result, the salesperson will lose not only their current customers but also the potential ones, negatively impacting their performance. Thus, it is unlikely that low moral judgment will lead to high outcome performance in the long run.

Schwepker and Ingram (1996) suggest that research on relationship building may provide support to the positive relationship between moral judgment and outcome performance. When a salesperson behaves ethically, they build greater relationship with customers, as a result customers will buy from them regularly, increasing outcome results (Schwepker & Ingram, 1996). Similarly, Roman and Ruiz (2005) found that salespeople who behave ethically are more effective at building strong customer relationships (e.g., developing customers who are satisfied, trusting, and committed). A relationship formed between a salesperson and a customer has been found to positively impact customer loyalty and repeated buying (Chen & Mau, 2009; Alrubaiee, 2012).

Furthermore, customers buy from salespeople they trust, and a form of ethical behavior, honesty, resulting from high moral judgment, is considered to be critical for developing trust (Goff et al., 1997). This shows that ethical behavior resulting from high moral judgment leads to greater customer relationships and loyalty, ultimately increasing sales. However, several studies that have looked at the relationship between salespeople's moral judgment and outcome sales performance have found mixed results. A positive relationship between moral judgment and success in achieving quantity sales (outcome performance) was demonstrated by Schwepker and Ingram (1996). They concluded that salespeople who make moral judgments with respect to selling practices at a higher level also tend to perform at a higher level. However, a similar study conducted by Schwepker and Good (2011) did not find a positive relationship between salespeople's moral judgment and outcome performance. Similarly, Howe et al. (1994) found that salespeople engaging in unethical behavior had higher levels of sales premiums than ethical salespeople.

Nevertheless, there is a consensus on the positive relationship between moral judgment and behavior performance in the sales literature (e.g., Schwepker & Good, 2011; Schwepker & Ingram, 1996). Salespeople who have high moral judgment show desirable selling behaviors (e.g., communicating with customers, handling post-sales problems, listening attentively, addressing customers' concerns and, solving customer problems) (Schwepker & Good, 2011). Moreover, the relationship that is built from such customer-centric behaviors should generate customer loyalty and, thus, repeated sales, which over time increases outcome performance. It is therefore proposed that:

P1: A salesperson's moral judgment is positively associated with his/her overall sales performance.

Sales quota

Sales quota, a standard of performance measurement for salespeople, also serves as a managerial tool for influencing performance (Schwepker & Good, 2004a) and affects attitudes and motivation (Oliver & Anderson, 1994). Sales quota is used in an outcome-based control mechanism where management focuses on the results. Quotas, in this regard, serve to direct salespeople's efforts towards selling. Salespeople mostly work in an isolated environment which makes it difficult for sales managers to continually supervise salespeople's activities (Anderson & Oliver, 1987). Also, many sales managers do not want to excessively monitor salesforce and prefer to let their sales force work by their own means (Anderson & Oliver, 1987). Therefore, a sales quota is assigned because it can be used to supervise an individual salesperson's effort and performance. Besides supervision, quota also helps in making decisions on providing rewards (commission, promotion, pay raise) based on their quota achievement (Schwepker & Good, 2004a).

A consensus in sales is that salespeople need to be regularly motivated as personal selling can be a discouraging and highly stressful job (e.g., rejection from customers, pressure to convince customers to buy, finding prospects, and task ambiguity due to little contact with supervisors) (Anderson & Oliver, 1987). As such, outcome-based rewards are necessary to maintain motivation. On the contrary, an unreasonable sales quota leads to loss of motivation and negatively affects their efforts, job satisfaction, organization commitment, and turnover intention (Darmon, 1997).

The majority of empirical studies on sales control systems have focused on the impact of sales quota on productivity (e.g., Chung et al., 2014), sales quota difficulty (e.g., Darmon, 1997; Oyer, 2000), frequency (how often the quota is assigned) (e.g., Chung et al., 2021; Chung et al., 2014) and quota-bonus plans (Mantrala et al., 1994; Oyer, 2000). However, there is another area of sales quota, perceived quota difficulty, which is underexplored in sales research. Very few studies that have used this construct have empirically investigated it in relation to ethical decision-making (e.g., Schwepker & Good, 1999; Schwepker & Good, 2004a; Schwepker & Good, 2007). However, these empirical studies do not provide a proper conceptualization of the construct. It is necessary to understand how a salesperson's perceived quota difficulty is formed because it has implications on how people form decisions of selling activities (e.g., Schwepker & Good, 2004a). Because there is not much research on perceived quota difficulty, research on task difficulty/complexity may help understand how decision-making varies based on personal belief versus objective evaluation. Furthermore, the conceptualization of perceived quota difficulty as a consequence of selling self-efficacy may build on our understanding of perceived quota difficulty.

Distinguishing perceived quota difficulty from objective quota difficulty: Drawing upon task complexity

Campbell (1988) suggested that objective and subjective(perceived) task complexity reflects distinct constructs. Subjective/perceived task complexity refers to an individual's perception of how complex the task is. Objective complexity is related to the characteristics of the task itself, while subjective complexity is based on one's psychological experience with the task and is influenced by person-task interaction (Campbell, 1988). The objective complexity of the task is the same across individuals, but individuals working on the same task can perceive it differently. This perceived complexity can be influenced by familiarity with the task, and the availability of physical and cognitive resources (Braarud, 2001). In an objective sense, task complexity can range from simple, moderate to complex. It is dependent on factors such as the time it takes to complete the task, the contents of the task itself and, the process involved in completing the task. Subjective complexity is the task assessed by the task doer and whether the task is difficult or easy to complete will be dependent solely on the user's view of the task (Li & Belkin, 2008). Thus, even if the task is simple in an objective sense, a person with lesser cognitive and physical resources (such as time and tools) or even negative prior experience with the task may view the task as complex (Mangos & Steele- Johnson, 2001). Therefore, the perceived complexity can be significantly different from an objective view of complexity.

In line with the research on task complexity, it is reasonable to suggest that the perceived quota difficulty of a salesperson is different from objective quota difficulty. Salespeople who are assigned the same quota may experience the quota very differently. Schwepker and Good (2012) state that perception of quota represents the individual's interaction with the quota assignments. Like objective task difficulty, an objective quota difficulty should depend on the quota's

characteristics, such as the time it takes to achieve the quota, how difficult it is (e.g., meeting quota on new products may be more difficult), quota frequency, and so forth. However, each salesperson will form their judgment around that quota differently based on their own biases, feelings, and psychological experience (Schwepker & Good, 2004a). Thus, one's perception of quota difficulty will be different from the objective view of the quota. Similarly, when a sales manager assigns a quota, he/she might consider the quota assignment as an easy task; however, the salespeople's views towards it can be completely different. This has an impact on salesperson's motivation and the effort they exert. Salespeople exert lower efforts into goals they believe are unobtainable (Schwepker & Good, 2012). Therefore, it is important to know the distinction between objective and perceived quota difficulty.

Several studies investigated the effects of objective quota difficulty in the sales context. For example, Chowdhury (1993) studied the impact of quota level on the expenditure of effort and found a negative relationship. Salespeople's expenditure of effort was highest when sales quotas were at the intermediate levels. This is because low quota levels required low effort, and high quota levels demotivated people because they expected to fail. Similarly, in Ross's (1991) study, salespeople's decision-making was found to be affected by the level of sales quota assigned to them. Salespeople make decisions that provide them with the best opportunity to meet the quota irrespective of risks (Ross, 1991). McFarland et al. (2002) discovered that dual targets (sales quota with bonus plan) influence the sales call selection made by salespeople. Similarly, quota characteristics were found to influence risk behavior (Gaba & Kalra, 1999), product focus, forward-looking behavior (Chung et al., 2021), selling effort and new product sales (Fu et al., 2009). While many studies have focused on objective sales quota difficulty, not many have examined the effects of perceived quota difficulty in a sales setting. Schwepker and

Good (2004a) and Schwepker and Good (1999) note that actual quota may be less significant in the motivational process than one's perception of quota difficulty. Thus, it is important to understand how one's perceived quota difficulty is formed.

Mangos & Steele- Johnson (2001) suggest that an individual's perception of task complexity would be influenced by self-assessments of competence (i.e., self-efficacy). Based on a similar notion, the following sections outline how one's self-efficacy and the variables originating self-efficacy may influence one's perceived quota difficulty.

Self efficacy

Self-efficacy is considered to be a core component of Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) and an important personal determinant of human behavior. SCT posits that an individual's learning occurs through a dynamic and reciprocal interaction with other people, environment, and behavior (Bandura, 1977). And such continuous interaction shapes whether a person will engage in specific behavior and maintain that behavior (Bandura, 1977). Drawing from SCT, Bandura (1977) advanced the concept of self-efficacy. According to this concept, the change in one's behavior takes place when a person believes in their capacity to perform a given behavior; the sense of capability, described as self-efficacy. Self-efficacy theory and the broader social cognitive theory in which self-efficacy is encompassed are based on the premise that an individual's past behaviors, cognition, social environment, and physical environment influence future behavior (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

Albert Bandura (1986) describes self-efficacy as a function of beliefs in one's capability with which individuals can accomplish a task. Self-efficacy is said to differ in the dimension of generality. General self-efficacy refers to a general belief in one's ability to succeed across a variety of situations or generally in life. In contrast, task-specific self-efficacy refers to their

perception of their ability to perform tasks specific to a situation (e.g., mathematics self-efficacy, entrepreneurial self-efficacy, and sales self-efficacy). Bandura (1977) states that specific forms of self-efficacy provide the most accurate judgment about one's ability to perform tasks specific to a situation. Therefore, for this study, sales self-efficacy is the focal construct of interest. Sales self-efficacy involves one's belief about the ability to succeed in one's sales job (Sujan et al., 1994).

Self-efficacy influences an individual's choice, motivation, thought pattern, and responses regarding whether to expend effort, the level of effort to expend, and how long to exert the effort in the face of difficulties when performing a task (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998). Support for such assertion has been found in sales literature as well. Salespeople with a higher level of sales self-efficacy have been found to engage in more challenging tasks such as selling new products, exert more effort, motivate themselves and persevere in the face of selling difficulties (e.g., Fu et al., 2009). Similarly, positive relationship between selling self-efficacy and achievement in sales jobs such as learning orientation (Sujan et al., 1994) and sales performance (Krishnan et al., 2002) have also been demonstrated. Salespeople with higher sales self-efficacy have been found to perform better in sales communication and sales presentation tasks even in a highly challenging setting of cross-cultural selling (Charoensukmongkol & Pandey, 2020)

In summary, it has been well established that self-efficacy positively impacts performance through its influences on how people think, feel, motivate themselves, and act. Individuals with low self-efficacy tend to believe that tasks are harder than they actually are, resulting in increased stress and a narrowed viewpoint (Bandura, 1986, p. 394). When an individual's viewpoint about their ability to perform is limited, they exert low effort and motivation towards the task at hand and make negative perceptions about similar future tasks.

In the context of the sales setting, salespeople's self-efficacy plays a vital role in how they perceive their selling tasks. When there is a control system comprising of sales quota, one's selling sales efficacy may affect the kind of assumption they make about the quota achievement. This includes their perception about how much effort they need to exert, whether they will successfully achieve the quota goal, and more importantly, how difficult they perceive their assigned quota to be. In the next section, the relationship between perceived quota difficulty and self-efficacy is explored to conceptualize perceived quota difficulty as a consequence of one's self-efficacy.

Relationship between Self-efficacy and Perceived Quota difficulty

This section highlights the sources of self-efficacy and how it may impact one's perceived quota difficulty. The main objective of this section is to discuss that one's perception of quota difficulty is not formed in a vacuum, and salespeople's past experiences and environment play a vital role in how they perceive their assigned sales quota.

According to Bandura (1977), individuals develop self-efficacy beliefs over a period of time through four sources of information and experiences - (1) performance accomplishments, (2) vicarious experiences, (3) verbal persuasion, and (4) physiological states. Performance accomplishments refer to one's mastery experiences in one domain, and repeated successes in that domain enhance self-efficacy, whereas failure lowers the self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977). A meta-analysis study by Sitzmann and Yeo (2013) suggests that self-efficacy has a stronger relationship with past performance, which in turn can affect future performance. Information regarding how one performed in the past influences one's judgment about their capacity to succeed in the future. Similarly, Bandura (1986) also suggest that our past choices and actions may affect future behavior partly through its effects on our self-efficacy. In the

context of salespeople, the above finding suggests that the achievements of sales performance result in high self-efficacy towards future sales performance. Salespeople with a track record of achieving sales quotas should form strong self-efficacy in their ability to achieve future quotas. As a result, they may perceive the assigned sales quota to be less difficult. On the contrary, salespeople who experience repeated failure may also expect future quotas to be difficult for them to achieve.

Another source of self-efficacy is vicarious experiences which refer to learning from watching people similar to us successfully completing a task (Stajkovic & Luthans, 2003). When a salesperson sees his colleague completing his selling tasks and meeting the quota, he is more likely to absorb a few positive beliefs about himself. Vicarious experiences can enhance self-efficacy because individuals can be confident that they are using behaviors known to be successful (Bandura, 1977). Using the actions known to be successful, one can be somewhat optimistic that the assigned quota is not very difficult for them to achieve.

The verbal persuasion source of self-efficacy refers to encouragement from people, which adds to one's growing belief in their ability to succeed (Bandura, 1977). Words of encouragement from colleagues or sales managers reinforce an individual's belief in their ability to undertake sales duties. For example, feedback, comments, words of encouragement are all types of verbal persuasion. Salespeople who receive words of encouragement from their sales managers regarding quota may believe in their ability to successfully achieve quota, thus reducing their perception of quota difficulty.

Finally, physiological states as a source of self-efficacy suggest that people have vulnerabilities such as anxiety and fear, which can reduce one's self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). A salesperson is likely to believe that quota is difficult to achieve because of fear or anxiety.

Only one study by Schwepker and Good (1999) has tested the relationship between self-efficacy and perceived quota difficulty. As expected, they found a negative relationship between the two. The study highlighted that salespeople with low sales efficacy are more likely to believe (even when this is incorrect) that they have been assigned a difficult quota.

In summary, because of one's experiences and information available, an individual's assumption about future tasks may also change. Applying this to the sales context, a salesperson who has experienced failures with selling tasks has received negative feedbacks, has seen his colleagues fail, or has emotional discrepancies will be less self-efficacious. In line with Bandura's conceptualization of self-efficacy and Schwepker and Good's (1999) study, one would reasonably expect salespersons who are efficacious at selling to perceive quota as not being difficult, while less efficacious salespersons would do.

Moderating role of Perceived quota difficulty on the Moral Judgement- Performance Relationship

Empirical research has demonstrated that salespeople are "quota achievers, not dollar maximizers" (Churchill, Ford, & Walker 1982, as cited by Ross, 1991, pg. 297). This indicates that quota is a reference point for salespeople where priority is given to achieving quota as achievement of quota signifies the completion of the work demanded from the management. Furthermore, because quota is used as a tool to measure performance where commission, promotion, pay raise depends on it, we can expect salespeople to be more attentive towards achieving quota. Moreover, many sales managers do not want to actively guide salesforce and prefer to let salespeople work by their own means (Anderson & Oliver, 1987). As a result, managers are not able to fully supervise salespeople's behavior performance, but they can easily track quota performance. Therefore, sales quota is also assigned because it can be used to

supervise an individual's effort and performance. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that salespeople will focus more on achieving quotas than other aspects of their job.

Another important point noted by Ross (1991) is that salespeople are risk-seeking if they perceive that the risky opportunity will help them achieve their goals. Further, the study found that quota level affected salespeople's decision-making in such a way that they were willing to make risky decisions to achieve their quota. This indicates that when quota achievement is a dominant objective, salespeople may seek risky behavior (e.g., acting unethically) if they believe it will help them meet quota. Likewise, Barsky (2008) argued that salespeople exposed to difficult outcome performance goals are more likely to act unethically.

In a study of sales manager's ethical decision-making, sales manager's quota difficulty was found to positively increase their probability of allowing salespeople to act unethically (Schwepker & Good, 2004a). However, because the study did not measure the moral judgment or ethical intention of sales managers, one explanation for such finding could be that sales managers were unethical to begin with, and as a result, high unethical decision-making was observed. In such a case, we cannot say with certainty that one's quota difficulty was a catalyst in affecting ethical decision-making. In a study of financial service salespeople, Schwepker and Good (1999) found that perception of quota difficulty negatively affected salespeople's moral judgment when people believed consequences of quota failure were high and the market was unattractive. However, as meeting quota is part of a salesperson's job, the existence of a sales quota will encourage people to extend more efforts towards achieving it. This is because quota achievement signifies one's efforts and ability to do the work. Bommer et al., (1987) suggests that individual consider ethical behavior to be a sub-goal to performance goals and ethical behavior is only considered important if it does not take away from performance goals. Thus, it

is within reason to assume that a salesperson will extend more efforts to meet the quota than on other aspects of their job. As highlighted by Ross (1991) and Barsky (2008), salespeople exposed to a challenging situation are more likely to act unethically to achieve their goals.

Proposition one suggests a simplistic and direct relationship between moral judgment and overall sales performance. However, even salespeople who always behave ethically and have a solid sales track record may find themselves in a situation where they want to engage in unethical activities. For example, in the Wells Fargo Bank Scandal case, the senior management announced that only one percent of their total sales employees were engaged in the cross-selling incident who otherwise did not have such past records (Tayan, 2019). The management further stressed that there was an ethics program focused on addressing conflicts of interest and helping their salespeople. If the quota was very difficult to achieve, it does not explain why the ninety-nine percent were maintaining the quota while also behaving ethically. Thus, the difference between the ethical and unethical bank sales employees' actions could simply be linked to their perception of quota difficulty. Because they assumed that they would not be able to meet the new cross-selling targets, some salespeople who otherwise had good selling records resorted to unethical actions. This shows that the impact of their moral judgment, especially on behavior performance, is lower when the perception of quota difficulty is high. Over time unethical actions will result in loss of customers and outcome performance.

In summary, for salespeople who have high moral judgment, we expect high performance as a result of generating trust and building relationships through ethical behavior. However, when one perceives their quota as difficult to achieve, one may engage in unethical behavior, which negatively impacts their performance. Similarly, when salespeople engage in unethical activities, it taints the relationship with customers and, as a result, decreases overall sales

numbers as well. Therefore, the positive relationship that existed between moral judgment and sales performance weakens when perceived quota difficulty is high. The above discussion leads to the following proposition:

P1a: Under conditions where salespeople's perceived quota difficulty is high, a salesperson's moral judgment will have a lesser positive impact on his/her sales performance.

Methodology

A pilot study was conducted to test the study measures and to guide the planning of a large-scale investigation in the future. In effect, this test of study measures in a small sample will reduce the chance of failure in a larger project should an academic researcher plan to conduct an empirical study based on the propositions of this study. Furthermore, it can also reveal ethical and practical issues that could hamper the future empirical study. The survey instrument was pre-tested in a small sample of salespeople to assess the reliability, or internal consistency, of the scales. In addition, biases and measurement design are discussed, and preliminary correlation analysis between the constructs was conducted, and significant relationships are reported.

Participants and Recruitment procedure

Salespeople directly involved in selling the products/services for their company were the participants of interest in this study. Salespeople representing varieties of industries and working in companies based in Newfoundland, Canada, were recruited for this pilot study.

For the purpose of data collection, ethical approval was gained from Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University. Recruitment emails explaining the study with a link to an anonymous online survey were distributed to companies

operating across several industries. Participants were recruited in two ways: (1) emails were sent to companies operating in Newfoundland and Labrador, Canada where companies were requested to forward the emails to the sales representatives working at the company (2) Gardiner Centre, an outreach center at MUN, distributed the anonymous survey link on their bi-weekly newsletter. The emails reached sales representatives who were subscribed to the newsletter. The recruitment email and the consent form highlighted that only the salespeople were eligible to participate in the survey.

Standard ethics procedures were followed throughout the study. Interested participants clicked on the survey link, which directed the participants to an informed consent page before starting the survey hosted by Qualtrics. The consent form informed the participants of their voluntary participation and their right to withdraw at any point in the survey. Consent was implied when the participants pressed the 'I consent' button, and they were not allowed to proceed without providing their consent. Further, they were free to skip questions and quit participating at any point by simply closing the browser. Because personal identifiers were not collected, once participants submitted the response, it was not possible to identify the data for deletion.

Data screening

In total, 46 complete responses out of 68 total responses were obtained after data cleaning. While this percentage of rejection may seem high, it is not entirely due to the quality of the data but mainly due to incomplete responses. 32.35 % (22 individuals) either did not answer any questions or left partway through the survey.

Measures

The scales used in this study come from previous research studies in the sales and marketing domain (for full measures see Appendix 2).

Moral judgment

Moral judgment was measured using a multidimensional ethics scale developed by Reidenbach and Robin (1990). Respondents were asked to judge three ethical/unethical scenarios by responding to eight items in each scenario. Every item is based on a 7-point scale anchored by bipolar adjectives (e.g., fair/unfair; morally right/not morally right; just/unjust), and the same adjectives follow each scenario. Reidenbach and Robin (1990) refined the initial 30-item scale (Reidenbach & Robin, 1988) into an 8-item instrument to measure moral judgment of people which captures three ethical dimensions (1) a broad-based moral equity dimension; (2) a relativistic dimension, and (3) a contractualism dimension. These dimensions are derived from the three ethical philosophies previously discussed in Section 2: justice, relativism, and deontology (McMahon & Harvey, 2007). Moral equity and relativistic dimension are based on justice and relativism philosophy, which are developed during the childhood training and upbringing. Contractualism forms later in life through numerous transaction experience. It takes a deontological approach to problem of ethics and the rightness or wrongness of the conduct is determined by the implicit/explicit contractual agreement between two parties (Reidenbach & Robin, 1988). In the context of sales, these transaction experience could be implicit/explicit contract made with customers, managers, and colleagues. Utilitarianism and egoism philosophy has been found to have a minimal contribution to the explanatory and predictive power of the measure (Reidenbach & Robin, 1988); therefore, they are not included in the scale.

There are numerous measures of moral judgment in ethics literature (e.g., Maitland & Goldman, 1974; Hogan & Dickstein, 1972); however, only the Reidenbach and Robin (1990) measure include scenarios that embody ethical dilemmas in a selling situation. These scenarios have been recognized as an acceptable approach for conducting ethics research in marketing and sales (Chonko et al., 1996).

Perceived Quota Difficulty

Schwepker and Good (1999) developed a three-item scale for assessing perceived quota difficulty. Two items used five-point Likert scales ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree." These two items ask about respondents' view of their quota and how easy it is to achieve it. The third item asks respondents to assess their chances of achieving their assigned quota on a ten-point scale ranging from (1) "not very good" to (10) "very good." The positively worded two items were reverse coded so that the higher scores summed across the three items indicate respondents perceived quota difficulty.

Sales performance

Salesperson performance is measured using two constructs – behavioral performance and outcome performance. Babakus et al. (1996) developed a 34-item scale that measures both behavioral and outcome performance. This self-report measure was adopted from Behrman and Perreault (1982) and Cravens et al. (1993). Behrman and Perreault (1982) argued in favor of this self-report measure and stated that salespeople have more complete knowledge of their behavioral performance than their supervisors and are able to provide more accurate information. Similarly, self-report measures have been found to be suitable in measuring objective performance (Churchill et al., 1985).

Behavioral performance in this scale evaluates the various activities salespeople engage in when executing their job responsibilities (Babakus et al., 1996). The 27-item scale includes items across technical knowledge, adaptive selling, teamwork, sales presentations, sales planning, and sales support performance. Salespeople respond to 7-point Likert statements ranging from 1 for "needs improvement" to 7 for "outstanding."

In the outcome performance scale, salespeople evaluated their objective performance in terms of producing high market share, generating high dollar sales, selling products with the highest profit margin, and so forth. The seven items scale also uses a seven-point scale ranging from 1 for "needs improvement" to 7 for "outstanding."

Social desirability bias

It is expected that the salespeople will have a tendency to answer questions in a socially desirable manner when the self-report measures are used, especially when the questions ask about their work-related activities. A social desirability bias scale developed by Strahan and Gerbasi (1972), which was based on Crowne and Marlowe's (1960) scale, was used to control for the bias. This six-item measure uses a six-point scale ranging from 1 for Strongly disagree to 6 for Strongly agree. The items comprise desirable and undesirable characteristics to assess whether bias exists in the responses.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is not a direct construct of interest in this study; however, it was added in the survey instrument initially to observe its relationship with other constructs, especially with perceived quota difficulty, given its influence in sales research. Self-efficacy (SE) is a domain-

specific measure. The selling self-efficacy scale developed by Sujan et al. (1994) was adopted. This 7-item scale measuring self-efficacy scale in sales setting was developed by modifying Chowdhury's (1993) measure of self-efficacy in negotiations" in organizations setting. To this date, this remains the most heavily used self-efficacy scale in sales setting cited by many researchers (Peterson, 2020).

Salespeople respond to six, five-point Likert statements ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree." The statements covered facets of selling situations such as "I am good at selling," "I know the right thing to do in selling situations," "I am good at finding out what customers want," and so on.

Discussion of measure assessment

Reliability indicates the extent to which the items of a specific construct are capable of measuring the various aspects of that same construct (Drost, 2011). This study reports the internal consistency of the measures using Cronbach's alpha.

Table 1
Pre-test Reliability Coefficients

Scale name	Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
Moral judgment multidimensional scale	0.78	24
Perceived Quota difficulty	0.72	3
Outcome performance	0.91	7
Behavior performance	0.95	27
Sales self-efficacy	0.84	7
Social desirability bias	0.86	6

The coefficient alpha over 0.70 level suggests that the measures have good reliability (Peterson, 1994). This provides initial support to the use of the measures.

Common method bias and measurement design

A potential problem with the questionnaire is method variance, which is attributable to the measurement method rather than the constructs of interest (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Such variance can threaten the validity of relationships observed between constructs. Doty & Glick, (1998) state that the magnitude of the discrepancies between the observed and true relationship between constructs resulting from common method variance leads to common method bias (pg. 375).

Although method bias is not an issue in pilot testing, this is discussed in the paper to give some insights on how it can be addressed in future empirical work should they come across this issue. Podsakoff et al. (2003) suggested that the researcher should obtain multiple measures from different sources and at different points in time in order to minimize the effect of common method variance. Due to the time limitation and low responses from salespeople during the pandemic, it was not possible to consider this suggestion in this pilot study. However, this could be seen as a potential for improvement of the study in the future.

Nevertheless, some of the simple procedural remedies suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003) of common method bias were employed in this pilot study. For example, a scale's format and its anchors influence responses when the same anchor points are used repeatedly (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Therefore, different response formats (Semantic differential scale and Likert scale) were used for the measurement of predictor and criterion constructs. Additionally, Podsakoff et al. (2003) suggest that allowing respondents to answer the survey anonymously makes them less

likely to answer dishonestly or in a biased manner; thus, anonymity in data collection was employed in the survey.

Schmidt and Hollensen (2006) suggest that questionnaire design is one of the important factors to get complete and accurate responses. The questions were grouped into different sections and pages, making it easier for participants to navigate through the survey. Each scale was followed by a clear description of actions to be taken by the respondents. The scales adapted from past research reduced its item ambiguity to a great extent, such that there was no complicated syntax and vague concepts that would drive respondents to exit the survey. This can also be observed from the response pattern in the pre-test. Out of 68 people who clicked on the link, only three respondents did not fully complete the question after starting the first question and 16 respondents left without viewing any question. The majority of the respondents who viewed the questions (46 out of 49 respondents $\approx 93\%$) completed the survey in its entirety. This shows that the majority did not have a problem understanding the question and filling up the survey.

In the future study with a large enough sample, in addition to procedural remedies, statistical remedies for the method biases would be appropriate. As suggested by Podsakoff et al., (2003), statistical remedies such as Harman's single-factor test and partial correlation procedure (a) partialling out social desirability or general affectivity, (b) partialling out a "marker" variable maybe suitable to account for method variance and test biases.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive statistics

As shown in table 2, the data set comprised 17 females (37%) and 29 males (63%). Participant's ages ranged from 25 to 64 years (mean= 45.1 years, S. D= 8.76). The majority of respondents (n=43) have formal higher education, and only three respondents have high school education. 21.7% represented the retail and consumer products industry while the rest represented variety of industries such as technology, construction, finance and insurance, wholesale, auto/transport and health & pharmaceutical. Majority of the respondents, 50% (n=23) had sales experience of more than ten years. 41.3% (n=19) had sales experience in the range 5 to 10 years, and 8.7% (n=4) had sales experience in the range of 2 to 5 years. Majority of respondents (n=16, 35.6%) fall into the annual income brackets of \$100,001- \$150,000. The lowest percentage of respondents, 8.7% (n=4), has an annual income of \$150,000 or higher.

Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Frequency	%	Cumulative %
Age	25-34	5	10.9
	35-44	17	47.8
	45-54	17	84.8
	55-64	7	100
Gender	Male	29	63.0
	Female	17	100
Education	High School	3	6.5
	College	17	43.5
	Bachelor's Degree	24	95.7
	Master's degree	2	100
	Retail & Consumer products	10	21.7
	Technology/ Software	6	34.8
	Construction	5	45.7

Industry	Finance and Insurance	5	10.9	56.5
	Wholesale	4	8.7	65.2
	Auto/Transport	7	15.2	80.4
	Manufacturing/Industrial	4	8.7	89.1
	Health & Pharmaceutical	4	8.7	97.8
	Others (Electronics)	1	2.2	100
Sales Experience	2-5 years	4	8.7	8.7
	5-10 years	19	41.3	50.0
	More than 10 years	23	50.0	100
Annual Income	\$25,001- \$50,000	6	13.3	13.3
	\$50,001-\$75,000	11	24.4	37.8
	\$75,001- \$100,000	8	17.8	55.6
	\$100,001- \$150,000	16	35.6	91.1
	\$150,000 and above	4	8.9	100

Past research suggests that the influence of age, gender, formal education, and sales experience on ethical decision-making and performance may be indirect and context specific as the observed direct effects were not very noteworthy (Ferrell et al., 2019). For example, formal education has been found to impact ethical decision-making and performance when the education comprises of sales education and rigorous sales training (Bolander et al., 2014). At the individual decision level, past research suggests that sales experience indirectly influences decision making and performance through its effects on procedural knowledge (i.e., the knowledge of selling method or skill) (Matsuo & Kusimi, 2002) and expertise (Ko & Dennis, 2004). Furthermore, salespeople with more sales experience have higher sales self-efficacy as self-efficacy is the product of past performance, performance accomplishments, and vicarious experiences (Sitzmann & Yeo, 2013). This may influence salespeople's ethical decision-making and sales performance because the past performance impact future performance (Sitzmann & Yeo, 2013). Therefore, controlling for sales experience may produce a different result and insight on moral judgment, perceived quota difficulty, and performance relationship. It would also be

interesting to explore whether these variables impact perceived quota difficulty. It may provide some insight into developing training programs based on these descriptive differences.

Discussion of study variables

A simple linear correlation between the constructs was performed to observe the association between the constructs of interest and discover possible new avenues for research in sales (see table 3). While correlation does not provide insight into the cause-and-effect relationship between variables, it can provide some indications of the nature and direction of the relationship between the variables of interest.

Table 3

Pre-test correlation of salesperson response variables

	Moral judgment	Perceived quota difficulty	Outcome performance	Behavior performance	Sales self-efficacy	Social desirability bias
Moral judgment	1					
Perceived quota difficulty	-0.154	1				
Outcome performance	-0.075	-0.292*	1			
Behavior performance	0.207	-0.337*	0.704**	1		
Sales Self-efficacy	-0.384**	0.164	0.651**	0.428**	1	
Social desirability	-0.699**	0.445**	0.189	-0.116	0.486**	1

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

As shown in table 2, Perceived quota difficulty was significantly negatively correlated with outcome ($r = -0.292$, $p < 0.05$) and behavioral performance ($r = -0.337$, $p < 0.05$), which is consistent with the study by Schwepker and Good (2012). Schwepker and Good (2012) used goal-setting theory (Locke & Latham, 1990) and outcome control system perspective to explain this negative relationship. Goal-setting theory suggests that specific and challenging goals (e.g., such as quotas) motivate salespeople to achieve sales objectives. However, due to the complex nature of salespeople's jobs (greater information processing, anticipating customer needs, and building relationships), specific goals may only lead to greater effort and not necessarily to enhanced performance (Schwepker & Good, 2012). Furthermore, performance is also diminished when there is a conflict between the organization's goal and individual goal. Individuals' desire lower goals so that they can be rewarded upon exceeding the goals, while organizations want greater returns (pay less for more sales). Schwepker and Good (2012) argued that when salespeople visualize their quota to be obtainable, performance can be expected to prosper. On the contrary, when salespeople visualize their quota to be unattainable, performance can be expected to diminish because individuals are not motivated to exert efforts into unobtainable goals if there is no reward (Schwepker & Good, 2012).

The negative relationship could also be explained by unethical selling. When salespeople believe quota to be difficult, they may try to find shortcuts (often unethical) to meet their quotas. When salespeople are unethical, customer's trust diminishes over time, resulting in salespeople losing more customers and thus, negatively affecting outcome performance. The act of being unethical in and of itself is the opposite of desired behavioral performance; therefore, unethical activities negatively affect behavior performance as well. Although it is not possible to infer any causal relationships from this correlation result, the significant correlation indicates that some

relationship may exist between these variables, especially when considering ethical behavior. Thus, empirically testing the impact of perceived quota difficulty on ethics-performance relationship as proposed in this study could provide important results.

An unexpected result, a significant negative relationship ($r = -0.384$, $p < 0.01$) was observed between moral judgment and self-efficacy. One explanation for such correlation is that this is a spurious relationship (Haig, 2003) that arises from sample selection bias or the sample size. Furthermore, it has also been suggested that such misleading value of correlations depends not on the relationship but on their sharing of highly related components (Pearson, 1897, as cited in Haig, 2003, pg. 128). Because individual's moral judgment and self-efficacy are both influenced by their past experience, socio-economic background, societal influences, and emotional states, such correlation may have been observed. However, another highly possible explanation is that the correlation could be purely illusory (Haig, 2003), and they cannot be given a plausible causal interpretation.

Outcome and Behavior performance were significantly positively correlated ($r = 0.704$). This is consistent with findings of Anderson and Oliver (1994), Piercy et al. (2006), and Schwepker and Schultz (2015). In addition, sales control literature suggests a positive causal relationship between behavior and outcome performance (Baldauf et al., 2005) which is supported by empirical evidence (Briggs et al., 2012). As discussed in the literature review section, high behavior performance is an indicator of the salesperson's ability/skills to effectively make sales, and the outcome performance is the result of their skills and efforts (Briggs et al., 2012).

Self-efficacy was significantly positively related to outcome ($r = 0.651$, $p < 0.01$) and behavior performance ($r = 0.428$, $p < 0.01$). The direct relationship between self-efficacy and

sales performance has been reported in previous studies (e.g., Brown et al., 1998; Krishnan et al., 2002). However, studies suggest that the path between self-efficacy and sales performance may be mediated by salespeople's consistent effort (Sujan et al., 1994). Being confident in one's ability encourages the individual to put consistent effort into their work, and they are less likely to "give up," thus enhancing performance (Krishnan et al., 2002).

Moral judgment and social desirability bias were significantly negatively correlated ($r = -0.69$, $p < 0.01$). This is contradictory to the study by Loo (2004) confirming the independence of moral judgment scores from social desirability scores. One explanation for this is that individuals tend to present their own behavior in a socially desirable manner than they do other people's behaviors (Chung & Monroe, 2003). Individuals tend to understate their unethical actions more than they do of other people. Therefore, it is possible that respondents may have over-claimed hypothetical actions of other individuals in the moral judgment scale as more unethical (socially unacceptable) than they actually are.

Social desirability bias was also correlated with perceived quota difficulty ($r = 0.445$, $p < 0.01$) and self-efficacy ($r = 0.486$, $p < 0.01$). The presence of social desirability bias may also explain the spurious relationship observed between self-efficacy and moral judgment. In a larger study, removing the effect of social-desirability bias will be necessary. Furthermore, after removing the effects, the relationship between variables that were not present initially may also be observed (Silverthorn & Gekoski, 1995).

Managerial Implications

From a managerial perspective, the relationships proposed in this research have several important implications for sales managers. Given that higher moral judgment leads to better

performance, sales managers may want to create an environment that fosters moral judgment. Although personal variables (e.g., age and gender) and personality traits (need for cognition, the big five personality traits) have been found to be related to salesperson performance (Sitser et al., 2013; Deeter-Schmelz & Sojka, 2007), managers have little control over such variables. However, extant research and ethical decision-making models (e.g., Ferrell & Gresham, 1985; Hunt & Vitelli, 1986) suggest that moral judgment is one of the few person-specific variables that can be influenced. Ferrell and Gresham (1985) suggest that individuals are influenced by their significant others, especially by those who are a part of their intimate personal groups or role sets. Over time, they tend to internalize the group norms. One way to influence moral judgment is by placing salespeople who exhibit higher moral judgment to work together and removing salespeople with lower moral judgment who may negatively influence others. Since salespeople are also influenced by their role sets (Ferrell & Gresham, 1985), managers should always set good examples by exhibiting high moral judgment in their works.

Another way moral judgment can be influenced is by creating an ethical climate in the organization. The ethical decision-making model by Hunt and Vitell (1986) shows that organizational norms, formal code of ethics, and code enforcement influence the ethical standards of the employees in the organization. Likewise, Murphy (2004) also notes that companies that regularly socialize their salespeople with the ethical guidelines and enforce their ethical codes have lower cases of problematic behavior. It is highly advisable to socialize salesforce with the companies' ethical guidelines and teach them how to handle ethical dilemmas.

The relationship between moral judgment and sales performance also has implications for salesforce recruitment. Rather than spending on moral education or training programs to educate

salespeople on ethical behavior, organizations should focus on hiring salespeople with high moral judgment. This also saves on the expenses of dismissing unethical salespeople and re-training new salespeople. As a part of the screening process in hiring, moral judgment assessment tools could be used to assess the candidate's moral judgment. In addition, managers should ask the candidate's past employers about the candidate's past performance in relation to ethical activities. Although these methods may seem excessive, the cost of employing these rigorous assessment methods prior to hiring would still be lower than the loss of money, customers, and reputation caused by the unethical behavior of salespeople. In the present competitive market, company reputation is an extremely important asset. Therefore, sales managers need to make changes in their hiring process and focus on hiring ethical salespeople.

The different dimension comprising ethical philosophies forming moral judgment also has practical implication for sales professionals. Moral equity and relativism dimension develop during childhood years from childhood training and are shaped by societal system. Therefore, influencing these dimensions may not be possible. Contractualism, on the other hand develops later in life from contractual and transactional experiences and thus, can be influenced. Managers should shape the contractualism aspect of salespeople by carefully crafting sales tasks where the contracts, rules, and promises to customers have ethical content. When the contractual agreement in selling functions focuses on customer's welfare, salespeople's contractualism dimension of moral judgment is influenced, and over time, they will internalize the ethical values demonstrated in the contracts.

Although sales managers can increase salesperson performance by fostering moral judgment using methods discussed above, there are several factors in play that can lessen the strength of the impact of moral judgment on salesperson performance. When salespeople

sacrifice their ethical values in order to meet their quota that they believe are difficult to achieve otherwise, fostering moral judgment will no longer deliver the desired performance level. Thus, in addition to influencing moral judgment, management should also focus on reducing the salespeople's perception of quota difficulty. One way to lessen perceived quota difficulty is through self-efficacy. Mastery experience (past successful performance) is a source of self-efficacy, and perhaps, this could be achieved if sales managers assign easier quotas to build the salespeople's efficacy. Over time, as salespeople build a robust belief in their ability to successfully perform similar future tasks, managers could gradually increase the quota level. As a result, salespeople's perception of quota difficulty goes down. Salespeople also form their self-efficacy beliefs through the vicarious experience of observing their peers perform tasks and successfully achieve goals (Bandura, 1977). When salespeople have positive role models at work, they are more likely to absorb at least a few of those positive beliefs about the self. Mentoring program where a successful salesperson is paired with another salesperson on a similar career path may be helpful at raising the salesperson's self-efficacy beliefs. Regular encouragement from managers pertaining to a salesperson's ability to perform is another great source of strengthening self-efficacy. Sales managers should focus on the regular cognitive appraisal of their sales team's ability to perform.

Individuals' physiological states such as stress and anxiety also affect their beliefs of efficacy. Sales managers should promote psychological well-being by encouraging work-life balance, introducing stress-relief programs, and increasing social support. Similarly, stressful situations such as harsh evaluation of quota performance and punishments should be minimal as this may increase the salespeople's need to behave unethically. Salesperson's involvement in the quota setting procedure may also help because they have more information about their utility

function (Darmon, 1997). By involving salespeople in the quota setting procedure, management can ensure that salespeople are not stressed by the quota they perceive to be difficult and thus, reduce the intention to behave unethically.

Another way sales managers can ensure that the salesforce consists of people who are confident and can take on challenging quotas is by hiring efficacious salespeople. As a part of the screening process, managers should strongly consider assessing candidate's sales self-efficacy. In addition to indirectly influencing ethical behavior by reducing perceived quota difficulty, managers should get regular input from salespeople about their attitudes towards the assigned quota. As role-sets are highly influential, managers should demonstrate through their actions that unethicity is never an option. Perhaps, this could be achieved if management emphasizes customer satisfaction and well-being over making sales.

The significant influence of behavioral performance on outcome performance has been empirically documented in previous studies (Briggs et al., 2012). While pre-testing the measure in this study, behavior performance and outcome performance showed a significantly high positive correlation signaling the relationship supported in the literature. Outcome results are usually beyond the salesperson's control, which suggests that sales managers should put a greater emphasis on managing salesperson behavioral activities in order to achieve higher outcome performance. This has implications on sales training as well. Sales training programs should focus on improving behavioral activities such as answering customer's questions honestly, understanding their needs, disclosing all the relevant information, continuous learning about the products, and so forth. Salespeople need to realize that customers are becoming increasingly demanding in terms of quality products and customized service (Wang & Netemeyer, 2002). It is becoming increasingly difficult to close sales with customers. Customers expect not only better

products but also expect better service, greater selling skills, thorough knowledge about the products, good buyer-seller relationship, honesty and many more. Therefore, sales managers should mentor and encourage salespeople to learn about customer's expectations, provide personalized solutions to their problems and improve skills and knowledge in the job on a continuous basis. These activities will help in building long customer relationships and gaining trust of the customers. Since behavioral activities are known to have ethical content (Schwepker & Good, 2004b), training programs focused on such activities will result in higher ethical behavior, which leads to outcome performance through customer loyalty and repeated sales.

The difference between salespeople's objective and subjective quota difficulty also has a few managerial implications. When a quota is objectively difficult, there are various means for addressing it, such as reducing the quota level, adjusting it for seasonality, changing the assigned territory, breaking down the quota and setting smaller milestones, and so forth. However, when the subjective(perceived) quota difficulty is high, changing it to fit each person's need is not feasible because it is a temporary fix rather than a long-lasting solution. Therefore, the root cause of perceived quota difficulty stemming from low self-efficacy must be addressed using the methods discussed previously.

In addition to regular performance evaluation, sales managers could further benefit by measuring moral judgment, ethical/unethical activities, self-efficacy, and perceived quota difficulty in their existing salesforce. By doing so, they can determine the factors that best predict ethical behavior and performance within their sales departments and make relevant changes to fit their needs. While measuring these factors, sales managers should be aware that salespeople or candidates can fake responses or give biased responses. When salespeople's behavior is not driven by authenticity, customers are able to detect it, which only creates

negative sentiments such as doubts and distrusts among customers (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2006). Therefore, it is highly recommended that sales managers influence moral judgment and foster an ethical environment where salespeople genuinely engage in ethical behavior.

Limitations

The major limitation faced in this study was the ability to collect data during this global pandemic. It was extremely difficult to get businesses interested in distributing the survey to their salesforce, and understandably so, because most of these businesses may have been facing financial and operational challenges during this COVID-19 pandemic. Many companies shut down their offices and moved to remote operations. For salespeople, a shift to remote interactions is exceptionally challenging as they need constant communication with their customers to close sales deals. During such times, it is reasonable that salespeople were not keen on participating in surveys. As a research student with financial and time constraints, the global pandemic added more difficulties to the already challenging area of data collection in sales research.

Many researchers maintain that getting information in sales study is difficult due to the nature of questions asked, such as sales performance which may be considered confidential (Carter et al., 2008; Swenson & Herche, 1994). Carter et al. (2008) provided evidence in their review of hundreds of papers in sales studies that the response rate of sales samples is much lower than non-sales samples. Additionally, a high rate of nonresponse in sales studies is not unusual when the study has no sponsorship from sales organizations or when inducements are not provided (Schwepker & Good, 1999; Swenson & Herche, 1994). Similarly, as Schwepker and Good (1999) and Randall & Gibson (1990) note, questions about ethics are considered to be sensitive, which discourages some respondents from completing the questionnaire. Thus, the use

of sales samples, the nature of the questions, and the challenges brought by the Global pandemic likely affected the survey completion rate.

The other limitations are associated with the pilot test and preliminary correlation analysis. The preliminary correlation analysis did not indicate a significant correlation between certain variables, which could be attributed to the low sample size. Although the data represents diverse groups of industries, a much larger sample is needed to achieve a particular level of desired power (Sawyer & Ball, 1981) and enhance the generalizability of the findings. Since the study focuses on topics that individuals may find sensitive (e.g., perception of quota difficulty, moral judgment), social desirability is always a concern. The purpose of the study was kept vague, and the moral judgment question did not ask respondents about unethical actions they may have taken but rather about actions taken by another in an ethical scenario. Respondents were informed of anonymity and confidentiality in data collection. However, because of the nature of the question, social desirability still may be observed, as was the case in the pilot study. In a more extensive study of empirical testing, social desirability bias scale should be employed; and based on the respondents' score, researchers must determine how many respondents with particular scores to include or exclude from the survey.

Finally, although there were statistical limitations to this small study, the main purpose of the pilot study was fulfilled since it showed the reliability of the measures recommended for future empirical testing.

Future direction

The first obvious recommendation for future research is to conduct empirical testing of the proposed relationships in this study. Testing the moderating effect and its strength could

provide evidence to the importance of perceived quota difficulty, an underexplored construct in sales literature. Furthermore, empirical work may open more avenues to further our understanding of perceived quota difficulty and its impact on selling functions. It is also recommended that the measures used here be used for future empirical work as the pilot study showed that the measures are reliable when tested in a sample of salespeople. When using these measures to test the model, it is recommended that the relationship is tested using a large enough sample (approximately 250-300 responses) for significant results. However, as suggested by (Sawyer & Ball, 1981), the exact number of sample size will depend on the individual researcher, their desired effect size, and power. The pilot study also provided some interesting correlations between constructs, such as between moral judgment and self-efficacy and between perceived quota difficulty and self-efficacy. It could be worthwhile to empirically explore their relationships in the future.

In this study, the focus was on perceived quota difficulty in the context of ethical decision-making and salesperson performance. In terms of opportunities for future research, the use of perceived quota difficulty in the context of its impacts on buyer-seller relationship, job stress, turnover intention, and team performance can offer a great deal of interest for future studies.

Very often, management creates sales plans for sales teams, not for individuals. As such, managers may assign sales quotas to the entire team instead of each salesperson. It could be worth exploring how the individual's perception of quota difficulty while working towards a team goal affects the salesperson's ethical decision-making and performance. When working in a team, some salespeople may exert lower effort and try to reap the benefits of the team efforts, the behavior known as a free-riding behavior (Delfgaauw et al., 2021). It would be interesting to

explore the influence of perceived quota difficulty on the intention to take part in such behavior. Conversely, studies could also explore the influence of team quota on the salesperson's perception of quota difficulty.

When salespeople perceive their quota as difficult, they may view their work environment as stressful. Salesperson's job stress has been found to be positively related to unethical intent (Schwepker & Good, 2017). It could be argued that perceived quota difficulty may impact ethical decision-making through its effects on job stress. Moreover, since job stress also leads to turnover intention (Arshadi & Damiri, 2013), investigating the relationship among perceived quota difficulty, job stress, ethical behavior, and turnover intention may produce some interesting insights.

Notably, the majority of sales ethics studies involve data collected within western cultures (Agnihotri & Krush, 2015), which limits our understanding of ethical decision-making. With the rise of globalization and multi-national organizations, it is important that management understands the culture-specific distinctions of their sales force. For example, Japan is known for its workaholic culture (Schaufeli et al., 2009), and within the sales industry, one can expect that salespeople are accustomed to high sales goals. As such, salespeople from Japan may have different perceptions of the kind of quota they believe to be difficult compared to their western counterparts. Similarly, people living in individualistic vs. collectivist countries have different ethical and work values that shape their decision-making (Oumlil & Balloun, 2017). Hence, cross-cultural research is necessary to further our understanding of quota perceptions and ethical decision-making. This is particularly important for a multi-national corporation with a salesforce comprising people from different cultural backgrounds where a single type of sales training program may not fit all. Management needs to consider the cultural difference that affects ethical

values, quota perceptions, selling approach, and so forth, and understanding the differences may help develop tailored sales training programs for each salesperson.

In the end, the aim of this conceptual paper was to highlight that personal and human dimension of personal selling such as moral judgment, self-efficacy and perceived quota difficulty have significant impacts on the individual performance. Since organizational performance is a collection of individual salesperson performance, understanding the personal and human dimensions are extremely important. Overall, by exploring and understanding the relationships of these human dimension and performance, sales practitioners can design sales training and development programs in such a manner that ethical behavior are encouraged, for the betterment of both organization and customers.

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Appendix 1: Ethics Approvals



Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

St. John's, NL Canada A1C 5S7 Tel: 709 864-2561
icehr@mun.ca www.mun.ca/research/ethics/humans/icehr

January 29, 2021

Ms. Ashmita Lamichhane

Faculty of Business Administration

Memorial University of Newfoundland

ICEHR Number:	20211274-BA
Approval Period:	January 29, 2021 – January 31, 2022
Funding Source:	
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Kirby Shannahan Faculty of Business Administration
Title of Project:	Assessing salesforce's perception of selling roles in relation to sales performance

Dear Ms. Lamichhane:

Thank you for your submission to the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR), seeking ethical clearance for your research project. The Committee appreciates the care and diligence with which you prepared your application. However, the participant recruitment email and the consent form need to state that demographic questions will be asked, and the survey preamble must state that participants should skip any questions that they do not wish to answer. The participant recruitment email should also state that the survey is anonymous. As well, the email to businesses should state that the distribution request is not a requirement of the Gardiner or Husky Centre that has forwarded it on your behalf. Please complete the ICEHR - Post-Approval Document Submission form and upload the revised recruitment emails, consent form, and survey.

The project is consistent with the guidelines of the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2). Full ethics clearance is granted for one year from the date of this letter. ICEHR approval applies to the ethical acceptability of the research, as per Article 6.3 of the TCPS2 (2018). Researchers are responsible for adherence to any other relevant University policies and/or funded or non-funded agreements that may be associated with the project.

The TCPS2 **requires** that you submit an Annual Update to ICEHR before January 31, 2022. If you plan to continue the project, you need to request renewal of your ethics clearance and include a brief summary on the progress of your research. When the project no longer involves contact with human participants, is completed and/or terminated, you are required to provide an annual update with a brief final summary and your file will be closed. If you need to make changes during the project which may raise ethical concerns, you must submit an Amendment Request with a description of these changes for the Committee's consideration. If funding is obtained subsequent to ethics approval, you must submit a Funding and/or Partner Change Request to ICEHR so that this ethics clearance can be linked to your award. All post-approval event forms noted above must be submitted by selecting the **Applications: Post-Review** link on your Researcher Portal homepage. We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,



Russell J. Adams, Ph.D.

Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on

Ethics in Human Research

Professor of Psychology and Pediatrics Faculties of Science and Medicine

RA/th

copy: Supervisor – Dr. Kirby Shannahan, Faculty of Business Administration

Appendix 2: Survey (Questionnaire)

Screening Question

First, we would like to know about your current role in the organization you are working at.

Do you sell products/services for your organization as a sales representative?

Yes

No

Moral Judgment

Three hypothetical sales scenarios are presented below. We are interested in learning about your opinion of the action performed by individuals in each of the three scenarios. Under each scenario, you will find eight items of polar opposites (fair/unfair, just/unjust, acceptable/unacceptable to my family). Please evaluate the action of the individuals and select between the two opposites for each of the 8- items.

Scenario 1:

A young man, recently hired as a salesman for a local retail store, has been working very hard to favorably impress his boss with his selling ability. At times, this young man, anxious for an order, has been a little over-eager. To get the order, he exaggerates the value of the item or withholds relevant information concerning the product he is trying to sell. No fraud or deceit is intended by his actions; he is simply over-eager.

Action: His boss, the owner of the retail store, is aware of the salesman's actions but he has done nothing to stop such practices.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Fair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unfair
Just	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unjust
Culturally acceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Culturally unacceptable
Violates an unwritten contract	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Does not violate an unwritten contract

Traditionally acceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Traditionally unacceptable
Morally right	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not morally right
Violates an unspoken promise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Does not violate an unspoken promise
Acceptable to my family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unacceptable to my family

Scenario 2:

A person bought a new car from a franchised automobile dealership in the local area. Eight months after the car was purchased, he began having problems with the transmission. He took the car back to the dealer, and some minor adjustments were made. During the next few months, he continually had a similar problem with the transmission slipping. Each time the dealer made only minor adjustments on the car. Again, during the thirteenth month after the car had been bought, the man returned to the dealer because the transmission still was not functioning properly. At this time, the transmission was completely overhauled.

Action: Since the warranty was for only one year (12 months from the date of purchase), the dealer charged the full price for parts and labor.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Fair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unfair
Just	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unjust
Culturally acceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Culturally unacceptable
Violates an unwritten contract	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Does not violate an unwritten contract
Traditionally acceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Traditionally unacceptable
Morally right	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not morally right
Violates an unspoken promise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Does not violate an unspoken promise
Acceptable to my family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unacceptable to my family

Scenario 3:

A retail grocery chain operates several stores throughout the local area including one in the city's ghetto area. Independent studies have shown that prices do tend to be higher and there is less of a selection of products in this particular store than in the other locations.

Action: On the day welfare checks are received in the area of the city, the retailer increases prices on all of his merchandise.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Fair	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unfair
Just	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unjust
Culturally acceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Culturally unacceptable
Violates an unwritten contract	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Does not violate an unwritten contract
Traditionally acceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Traditionally unacceptable
Morally right	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Not morally right
Violates an unspoken promise	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Does not violate an unspoken promise
Acceptable to my family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unacceptable to my family

Sales Self-efficacy

Now, please think about your role as a sales representative, your usual interaction with the customers/clients, and any challenges you may have faced in selling situations.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

- | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| Strongly disagree
(1) | Disagree
(2) | Somewhat disagree
(3) | Neither agree nor disagree
(4) | Somewhat agree
(5) | Agree
(6) | Strongly agree
(7) |
|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|-----------------------|

I am good at selling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is difficult for me to put pressure on a customer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I know the right thing to do in selling situations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I find it difficult to convince a customer who has a different viewpoint than mine	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My temperament is not well-suited for selling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am good at finding out what customers want	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is easy for me to get customers to see my point of view	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Perceived quota difficulty

The next two set of questions are about sales quota. We are interested in learning about your belief/opinion towards achieving the sales quota that you may get in your job.

For each item, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I believe my assigned quota is very difficult	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is easy for me to achieve my assigned quota	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Still, thinking about sales quota, how would you rate your chance of achieving your assigned sales quota, in your current job, in general?

Please indicate your rating on the following scale from 1 to 10, where (1) means that chances are not very good, and (10) means that chances are very good.

	Not Very Good									Ver y Good
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
The chance of me achieving my assigned quota is	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Outcome Performance

Now, think about your performance in your current role.

For each of the items below, please indicate your response on the following scale from 1 to 7, where (1) means needs improvement, and (7) means outstanding.

	Needs Improvement						Outstanding
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Producing a high market share for the company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Making sales of those products with the highest profit margins	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Generating a high level of dollar sales	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quickly generating sales of new company products/services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying and selling to major accounts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Producing sales or blanket contracts with long-term profitability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Exceeding all sales targets and objectives during the year	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Behavior Performance

Still thinking about your performance, how would you rate yourself in each of the following ? Although some of the statements may seem similar, there are differences between them, and you should treat each as a separate statement. Please indicate your response from 1 to 7, where (1) means needs improvement and (7) means outstanding.

	Needs Improvement						Outstanding
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Knowing the design and specifications of my company's offerings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Knowing the applications and functions of company's offerings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keeping up with my company's production and technological developments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Experimenting with different sales approaches	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Being flexible in the selling approaches I use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adapting selling approaches from one customer to another	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Varying sales style from situation to situation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Generating considerable sales volume from team sales (sales made jointly by two or more salespeople)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Building strong working relationships with other people in my company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working very closely with non-sales employees to close sales	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Coordinating very closely with other company employees to handle post-sales problems and service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discussing selling strategies with people from various departments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listening attentively to identify and understand the real concerns of your customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Convincing your customers that you understand their unique problems and concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using established contacts to develop new customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Communicating your sales presentations clearly and concisely	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Working out solutions to a customer's questions and objections on your own	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planning each sales call	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planning sales strategies for each customer	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planning coverage of your assigned territory/customer responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Planning daily activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing after the sale service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Checking on product delivery	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Handling customer complaints	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Following-up on product/service use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Troubleshooting product application problems	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Analyzing product use experience to identify new products/service ideas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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Social desirability

The following questions ask about your opinion on events that you may have experienced in your life. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements below.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Agree (5)	Strongly Agree (6)
There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
At times I have really insisted on having things my own way	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to gossip at times	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have never deliberately said something that hurt someone's feelings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm always willing to admit it when I make a mistake	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Demographic questions

Under which category does your age fall?

- 19 – 24 25 – 34 35 – 44 45 – 54 55 – 64 65 – 74 75 – 84 85 or older

Please indicate your gender.

- Male Female Non-binary / third gender Prefer not to say

Which of the following categories best describes the industry you primarily work in?

- Retail & consumer products Technology-software Construction Finance and Insurance
- Wholesale Auto/Transport Manufacturing/Industrial Health & Pharmaceutical
- Others (Please Specify) _____

Please indicate your highest level of education completed.

- No formal education High School College Vocational training University (Bachelor's degree)
- Master's degree Doctorate/PHD Other

How many years have you been working in sales or in the selling-related position?

- Less than 1 year 1-2 years 2-5 years 5-10 years More than 10 years

Please indicate your gross annual income level.

- Less than \$25,000 \$25,001 - \$50,000 \$50,001- \$75,000 \$75,001- \$100,000 \$100,001- \$150,000
- \$151,000 and above
-