

DEMOGRAPHIC ANTECEDENTS TO THE PRACTICE OF ADAPTIVE SELLING

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In an empirical study of the role of gender, age, sales experience, and education in the practice of adaptive selling, Levy and Sharma (1994) concluded that gender and education interact with age to affect the degree to which salespeople practice adaptive selling. In addition, as salespeople get older and more experienced, they demonstrate plateauing with regard to the practice of adaptive selling. The current study replicated and extended Levy and Sharma's work on a national random sample of industrial salespeople. Results did not find support for plateauing by salespeople, and the interactions among demographic factors were unrelated to adaptive selling. Managerial implications of the findings are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Adaptive selling has been a widely studied subject matter in personal selling and sales management for over two decades (e.g., Weitz 1981; Weitz, Sujan and Sujan 1986; Spiro and Weitz 1990; Levy and Sharma 1994; Marks, Vorhies and Badovick 1996; Robinson, Jr., Marshall, Moncrief and Lassk 2002; Giacobbe, Jackson, Jr., Crosby and Bridges 2006; Pelham and Kravitz 2008; Jaramillo, Grisaffe, Chonko and Roberts 2009). Defined as the “altering of sales behaviors during and across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation” (Weitz, Sujan and Sujan 1986, p. 175), adaptive selling captures the unique advantage of personal selling as a means of communication with the target market. Salespeople adept in practicing adaptive selling can tailor the sales message to fit the unique needs of the customer and the selling situation. Consequently, adaptive selling is expected to improve salesforce productivity (Spiro and Weitz 1990).

Given the importance of adaptive selling to the performance of sales organizations, sales managers should be interested in knowing if

demographic factors, such as, gender, age, experience, and education can be used to predict the degree to which salespersons will successfully practice adaptive selling. Although initial and on-going training and performance feedback can be used to develop the adaptive selling skills of salespeople, the relationship between demographic factors and adaptive selling in salespeople can be used to trim the candidate pool for initial appointments and promotion decisions. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between demographic factors and adaptive selling in industrial salespeople by replicating and extending a similar study by Levy and Sharma (1994).

Levy and Sharma (1994) examined gender, age, sales experience, and education as antecedents of adaptive selling in a sample of retail salespeople. Based on an extensive literature review, the authors hypothesized that there will be no gender differences in the practice of adaptive selling, and there will be an inverted u-shaped relationship between age, sales experience, education and the practice of adaptive selling. Although the hypothesis regarding gender was supported, the authors found an s-shaped relationship between age, sales experience and the practice of adaptive selling. Further, age and sales experience interacted with gender and education to affect

the practice of adaptive selling. Based on these results, Levy and Sharma (1994) concluded that the practice of adaptive selling by salespeople plateaus, and called for additional research in other contexts, such as, industrial sales. To the best of our knowledge, additional research on the role of gender, age, sales experience, and education in the practice of adaptive selling has not been reported.

The purpose of this study is to replicate and extend the findings of Levy and Sharma (1994). The replication involves examining the role of gender, age, sales experience, and education in the practice of adaptive selling in a national random sample of industrial salespeople. The extension of Levy and Sharma's (1994) work incorporates recent advances in the measurement of adaptive selling, and uses additional measures of experience as recommended by Levy and Sharma (1994).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

If demographic factors, such as gender, age, sales experience, and education are related to salesperson behaviors and performance, they can be useful in salesperson selection, training, and promotion. However, empirical research on demographic antecedents to sales performance has largely been inconclusive. Based on an extensive review of the sales literature, Weitz (1981, p. 88) concluded that "even variables that can be assessed with high accuracy and reliability, such as age, education, and sales experience, are related to performance in some studies and unrelated in others." Since adaptive selling is a significant predictor of sales performance, demographic antecedents to the practice of adaptive selling should be of great interest to academicians and practitioners.

Gender

Levy and Sharma (1994) theorized that there will be no gender differences in the practice of adaptive selling. The authors cited the similarity of customers' perceptions of men and women (Lambert, Marmorstein and Sharma

1990) and successful saleswomen's adoption of psychological traits associated with men (Goolsby, Lagace and Boorum 1992) as reasons for a lack of gender differences in adaptive selling. In a sample of retail salespeople, Levy and Sharma (1994) found no support for gender differences in the practice of adaptive selling. Empirical studies on gender differences in industrial salespeople (Busch and Bush 1978) and consumer products salespeople (Schul and Wren 1992) have generally supported that there are few differences between male and female salespeople. Thus, the following replication hypothesis is advanced:

Hypothesis 1: There are no differences between men and women in the practice of adaptive selling.

Age

Levy and Sharma (1994) used self selection, a reduction in information processing capabilities, and career stages to hypothesize that there will be an inverted u-shaped relationship between age and the practice of adaptive selling. Salespeople who practice adaptive selling will perform better than average and will be promoted to managerial positions over time. The remaining salespeople, who were unable or unwilling to practice adaptive selling will lower the average adaptive selling scores of the sales team, as they get older. Thus, self-selection will yield an inverted u-shaped relationship between age and the practice of adaptive selling.

The decline in information processing capabilities with age (Phillips and Sternthal 1977) is expected to reduce the adaptive selling by older salespeople. Further, based upon career stages of salespeople (Cron 1984; Cron, Dubinsky and Michaels 1988), Levy and Sharma (1994) proposed that salespeople will learn to practice adaptive selling during the exploration career stage and increasingly adapt to the selling situations during the establishment and maintenance career stages. However, the decreased work motivation during the disengagement stage will gradually lower the practice of adaptive selling. Taken

together, the changes in information processing capabilities and career stages will yield an inverted u-shaped relationship between age and the practice of adaptive selling. Levy and Sharma (1994) concluded that the practice of adaptive selling plateaus.

The review of the literature on career plateaus, age differences in information processing, and career stages can also support a u-shaped relationship between age and the practice of adaptive selling. Ference, Stoner and Warren (1977) identified "solid citizens" (effective plateauees) as the largest group of individuals in most organizations. Due to personal preferences or situational constraints, high performing salespeople may not accept additional responsibilities involved in promotions to higher ranks (Feldman and Weitz 1988), thereby negating the effect of self-selection on the age-adaptive selling relationship. In their empirical study on retail salespeople, Levy and Sharma (1994) did not observe a decline in the practice of adaptive selling with increasing age or sales experience.

Although information processing capabilities naturally decline with age, Phillips and Sternthal (1977, p. 447) concluded that "if the elderly are given the time needed to process information, their ability to learn will not be undermined by their diminished processing speed." Experienced salespeople are expected to acquire adaptive selling skills to a greater degree than their younger counterparts. Thus, the adaptive selling skills of older salespeople might compensate for the reduction in speed of processing information. When faced with an unconstrained task, no age differences have been found in search intensity, search outcome, and satisficing behavior (Cole and Balasubramanian 1993). Consequently, with age, salespeople may actually practice adaptive selling to a greater degree.

Empirical studies on the career stages of salespeople also support the potential for a u-shaped relationship between age and the practice of adaptive selling. Younger salespeople who just started their sales career

are most likely in the exploration stage of their career (Cron 1984). In this stage, salespeople are not sure if they have chosen the appropriate occupational field, and they are learning the skills required to be successful as a salesperson. Presumably, they are learning adaptive selling. Since they have not developed an extensive knowledge of customer categories and have not perfected their information acquisition skills, they may find it difficult to practice adaptive selling. Thus, adaptive selling may initially decline as salespeople gain experience in doing market research on each customer and develop a maximally effective sales presentation for that customer (Weitz, Sujan and Sujan 1986). While exploring the sales career, these salespeople may not be motivated by the challenge of successfully adapting to customers, when needed.

In an empirical study of the influence of career stages on salespeople's job attitudes, work perceptions, and performance, Cron and Slocum, Jr. (1986) concluded that sales performance was lower for salespeople in the exploration stage than for those in other career stages. Further, salespeople in the exploration stage "were less involved in their jobs, did not feel that their job was challenging, and did not feel as successful as salespeople in other career stages" (Cron and Slocum, Jr. 1986, p. 125). As salespeople get older and reach the establishment and maintenance stages of their careers, they become more skillful in practicing adaptive selling and use their skills to produce results and advance in their organization (Cron 1984). Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: There is a u-shaped relationship between age and the practice of adaptive selling.

Experience

Salespeople's age and experience are expected to be highly correlated and Levy and Sharma (1994) hypothesized that, as with age, sales experience will also have an inverted u-shaped relationship with the practice of adaptive selling. However, the authors found an s-

shaped relationship between experience and adaptive selling suggesting a plateauing effect, and recommended that “multiple indicators of sales experience should be used when evaluating prospective salespeople (Levy and Sharma 1994, p. 45). Accordingly, in the current study, total sales experience and total work experience of salespeople were considered.

Although age and experience will be highly correlated, their effects on adaptive selling may not be similar. As salespeople gain experience, they develop an elaborate knowledge structure which enriches their procedural knowledge (Leigh and McGraw 1989) and facilitates their adaptive selling behaviors (Weitz, Sujan and Sujan 1986). Note that salespeople may have work experience prior to working in sales for their current employer. Their entire work experience contributes to their declarative and procedural knowledge of situations, even if it does not involve their current customers. Even for salespeople in their exploration career stage, tenure was significantly related to sales performance, although, sales performance itself was lower than that of other career stages (Hafer 1986). Consequently, experience is expected to be positively related to adaptive selling. Empirical support exists for a positive relationship between sales experience and adaptive selling (Robinson, Jr., Marshall, Moncrief and Lassk 2002; Giacobbe, Jacson, Jr., Crosby and Bridges 2006). Thus, the following hypothesis is advanced:

Hypothesis 3: There is a positive relationship between experience and the practice of adaptive selling.

Education

Education helps individuals to critically evaluate situations, draw logical conclusions, and make informed decisions. Naturally, formal education is expected to facilitate adaptive selling by salespeople. However, Lambert, Marmorstein and Sharma (1990) found an inverse relationship between education and salespeople’s accuracy of customer perceptions. Levy and Sharma (1994)

hypothesized an inverted u-shaped relationship between education and the practice of adaptive selling since highly educated salespeople are expected to get frustrated with the repetitive selling tasks and eventually become disengaged. However, this hypothesis was not supported in their sample of retail salespeople. It is possible that highly educated salespeople who are frustrated with the repetitive selling tasks will quit their jobs, rather than remain disengaged and perform poorly. Since education is expected to facilitate information acquisition and interpretation, salespeople will benefit from higher education by better analysis of customer information, which in turn will facilitate adaptive selling. Education has been found to lower perceived obsolescence among salespeople (Jones, Chonko and Roberts 2004). Empirical evidence exists for the positive effect of education on sales performance (Cotham III 1969; Weaver 1969). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 4: There is a positive relationship between education and the practice of adaptive selling.

METHOD

Sample

The sample consisted of a national random sample of industrial sales professionals purchased from Dun and Bradstreet. These salespersons were employed at firms which fall within the Standard Industrial Codes (SIC) 20 through 39 representing industrial firms. Questionnaires were mailed to 3909 salespersons at their places of work. Along with the survey, a cover letter on University letterhead was included explaining the purpose of the study, requesting cooperation, and promising confidentiality. Four weeks after the original mailing, a postcard was mailed to all the salespersons urging them to respond to the survey if they hadn’t already. The mailing yielded 241 usable responses. After accounting for undeliverable envelopes, partially or uncompleted questionnaires, and ineligible responses, the response rate was 10.39 percent (Churchill 1991).

Approximately 92 percent of the respondents were male, and on average they completed 15.78 years of formal schooling. The average age of the respondents was 46.46 years, and their average total sales experience and average total work experience were 18.91 years and 26 years, respectively. Thus, the subjects were educated, experienced, and predominantly male. This demographic profile differs from the retail salespeople surveyed by Levy and Sharma (1994). Seventy-five percent of their respondents were female. On average, they completed 13.57 years of formal schooling, were 38.8 years old, and had 9.25 years of total sales experience. Thus, Levy and Sharma's (1994) retail salespeople were predominantly female, younger, and relatively less experienced compared to the industrial salespeople of the current study.

Nonresponse bias was assessed by comparing early and late respondents on adaptive selling, sales performance, and the demographic variables (Armstrong and Overton 1977). Early respondents differed from late respondents in total work experience ($p < 0.05$). However, cell means indicated that early respondents have worked 2.95 years longer. Although statistically significant, a three-year difference in total work experience between early and late respondents is unlikely to invalidate the conclusions of this study. Early and late respondents did not differ with regard to age, education, total sales experience, adaptive selling, and sales performance.

Measures

The variables in the current study were measured from the salesperson's perspective using a self-report mail questionnaire as part of a larger study. Adaptive selling was measured using the 5-item ADAPTS-SV developed by Robinson et al. (2002). A 9-point (1 = very strongly disagree 9 = very strongly agree) likert-type scale was used. Although Levy and Sharma (1994) used the 16-item ADAPTS scale developed by Spiro and Weitz (1990), the measurement properties of that scale has been questioned in subsequent research. Spiro and

Weitz (1990, p. 65) cautioned that "the 16-item scale is not unidimensional on the basis of statistical tests using confirmatory factor analysis." Marks, Vorhies and Badovick (1996) identified two dimensions underlying a subset of the 16-item scale, adaptive selling beliefs and adaptive selling behaviors. After a comprehensive set of confirmatory factor analyses, Robinson et al. (2002, p. 118) concluded that "researchers attempting to use ADAPTS as a single unidimensional construct by taking all 16 items and summing them in the traditional manner are, in effect, confounding their findings." Robinson et al. (2002) recommended the 5-item ADAPTS-SV scale to measure adaptive selling. In subsequent research, Chakrabarty et al. (2004) also found support for ADAPTS-SV as a better measure of adaptive selling compared to the 16-item ADAPTS scale. Consequently, in the current study, the 5-item ADAPTS-SV was used to measure adaptive selling.

Sales performance was measured using the 31-item performance scale developed by Behrman and Perreault, Jr. (1982). A 9-point (1 = your performance is very low compared to an average salesperson. 9 = your performance is very high compared to an average salesperson) Likert-type scale was used. Of these 31 items, the 7-item "sales objectives" dimension captures the overall performance of salespeople. Respondents also reported their age, gender, total work experience, total sales experience, and their level of education. Age and experience was measured in years. Education was measured in categories, but these categories were converted into number of years of schooling prior to data analysis (high school graduate = 12 years, college degree = 16 years, graduate degree = 18 years, etc.).

RESULTS

Confirmatory factor analysis was used to assess the psychometric properties of ADAPTS-SV and sales performance measures. A covariance matrix of ADAPTS-SV was input in LISREL 8.72 and a measurement model was estimated where each item reflected adaptive selling. The

measurement model fit the data very well ($\chi^2 = 2.35$, $p = 0.79$, $RMSEA = 0.00$, $NFI = 0.99$, $CFI = 1.00$, $GFI = 0.99$, $AGFI = 0.98$, $Standardized\ RMR = 0.01$). Similarly, a covariance matrix of the 7-item “sales objectives” dimension of the sales performance scale was input in LISREL 8.72 and a measurement model was estimated where each item reflected sales performance. Two items were deleted based on modification indices and standardized residuals. The respecified measurement model fit the data very well ($\chi^2 = 3.34$, $p = 0.64$, $RMSEA = 0.00$, $NFI = 0.99$, $CFI = 1.00$, $GFI = 0.99$, $AGFI = 0.98$, $Standardized\ RMR = 0.01$). As expected, there was a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.33$) between ADAPTS-SV and sales performance.

Table 1 displays the path estimates of the measurement models.

Convergent validity of ADAPTS-SV was assessed by examining the significance of the path estimates. All of the t-values were significant, thereby establishing convergent validity (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). The average variance extracted exceeded 0.50 and the composite reliability was 0.85 (see Table 1). Thus, ADAPTS-SV was a reliable and valid measure of adaptive selling. The sales performance measure also demonstrated convergent validity and the composite reliability and average variance extracted exceeded the recommended minimum.

TABLE 1
Estimates of the measurement models

| Construct | Items | Path Estimate (t-value) | ρ^1 | AVE ² |
|-------------------|---|-------------------------|----------|------------------|
| Adaptive Selling | When I feel that my sales approach is not working, I can easily change to another approach. | 0.82 (14.76) | 0.85 | 0.55 |
| | I like to experiment with different sales approaches. | 0.71 (11.97) | | |
| | I am very flexible in the selling approach I use. | 0.86 (15.71) | | |
| | I can easily use a wide variety of selling approaches. | 0.82 (14.61) | | |
| | I try to understand how one customer differs from another. | 0.42 (6.42) | | |
| Sales Performance | Producing a high market share for your company in your territory. | 0.88 (16.47) | 0.85 | 0.54 |
| | Making sales of those products with the highest profit margins. | 0.47 (7.38) | | |
| | Generating a high level of dollar sales. | 0.92 (17.91) | | |
| | Identifying and selling major accounts in your territory. | 0.58 (9.51) | | |
| | Exceeding all sales targets and objectives for your territory during the year. | 0.74 (13.01) | | |

¹ Composite Reliability

The research hypotheses were tested using an OLS regression. All variables were entered in deviation form to avoid potential multicollinearity (Aiken and West 1991). Scores on adaptive selling were regressed on gender (dummy variable), age, a quadratic term of age, total sales experience, a quadratic term of total sales experience, total work experience, education, and a quadratic term of education. The quadratic terms of total sales experience and education were introduced in the model to examine whether Levy and Sharma's (1994) findings are replicated. In addition, since supervisors often accompany industrial salespeople on sales calls, a dummy variable representing whether the sales manager goes on sales calls with the respondent was also included in the model. Table 2 displays the regression results.

The regression model was significant ($F_{9,179} = 3.014$, $p < 0.01$) and explained 9 percent of the variance in adaptive selling. The largest VIF value was 6.277. Thus, multicollinearity was unlikely to bias the findings. As Table 2

indicates, the regression coefficient of gender was not significant ($\beta = 0.064$, $t = 0.786$). Thus, hypothesis 1 was supported and our results concur with those of Levy and Sharma (1994). Male and female salespersons do not differ in the degree to which they practice adaptive selling.

The standardized regression coefficient of age was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.455$, $t = -2.566$, $p < 0.05$) and the standardized regression coefficient of age^2 was positive and significant ($\beta = 0.224$, $t = 2.242$, $p < 0.05$). Consequently, there was a u-shaped relationship between age and the practice of adaptive selling, and hypothesis 2 was supported. This finding differs from that of Levy and Sharma (1994). The finding that industrial salespeople practice adaptive selling to a greater degree as they grow older has important managerial implications.

Hypothesis 3 was partially supported since total work experience had a significantly positive effect ($\beta = 0.622$, $t = 3.484$, $p < 0.01$) on

TABLE 2
OLS regression results

| Dependent Variable | Independent Variables | Standardized Coefficients | t-value |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Adaptive Selling | Gender | 0.064 | 0.786 |
| | Age | -0.455 | -2.566 ^b |
| | Age ² | 0.224 | 2.242 ^b |
| | Education | 0.152 | 1.921 ^c |
| | Education ² | 0.089 | 1.186 |
| | Total Sales Experience | 0.015 | 0.124 |
| | Total Sales Experience ² | -0.177 | -1.599 |
| | Total Work Experience | 0.622 | 3.484 ^a |
| | Supervisor with Salesperson | 0.248 | 3.318 ^a |
| | | | |

^a $p < .01$

^b $p < .05$

^c $p < .10$

adaptive selling. However, the standardized coefficients of total sales experience were not significant. Thus, total sales experience was unrelated to adaptive selling, and this study fails to support the s-shaped relationship reported by Levy and Sharma (1994).

Finally, the standardized regression coefficient of education was significantly positive ($\beta = 0.152$, $t = 1.921$, $p < 0.10$), thereby providing support for hypothesis 4. Highly educated salespeople practice adaptive selling to a greater degree than their less educated counterparts. This finding differs from that of Levy and Sharma (1994) who did not find support for the main effect of education on adaptive selling. However, their linear contrasts provided support for the positive effect of education in older salespeople.

It was noteworthy that whether the sales manager accompanies the salesperson on sales calls was highly significant ($\beta = 0.248$, $t = 3.318$, $p < 0.01$) in predicting the degree to which salespeople engaged in adaptive selling. Apparently, sales managers acted as good role models for the respondents of this study. Recent studies have confirmed the role of sales managers in promoting salesperson adaptive selling behaviors (e.g., Paparoidamis and Guenzi 2009).

Following Levy and Sharma (1994), adaptive selling scores were regressed on interactions among age, gender, education, and experience. None of the interactions were significant and the model did not explain any variance in adaptive selling ($F_{6, 195} = 0.584$, $sig. = 0.743$). Thus, in the current study, interactions among demographic factors were unrelated to the practice of adaptive selling.

DISCUSSION

In the current study, industrial salespeople became more adaptive as they grew older and gained more experience. If sales managers believe that salespeople plateau as they get older, these highly experienced salespeople may be passed over for promotion.

Consequently, managers should ensure that older salespeople have actually disengaged from their jobs, before making any decisions regarding their future. Even if there are no opportunities for promotion, older and experienced salespeople may be more adept in handling additional responsibilities, such as, training new recruits, handling key accounts, etc. By lowering the likelihood of assigning additional responsibilities to these salespeople, managers may actually induce career plateau (Feldman and Weitz 1988). One of the major contributions of this study is there should be no stereotypes regarding the effectiveness of older, mature salespeople, in practicing adaptive selling.

A notable finding of this study is that the presence of supervisors during sales calls had a significantly positive effect on the practice of adaptive selling by industrial salespeople. Approximately 78 percent of the respondents indicated that their sales managers actually go on calls with them. By observing sales calls, sales managers have the opportunity to provide behavioral feedback (Jaworski and Kohli 1991), demonstrate proper selling techniques, and improve the learning and performance orientation of salespeople (Kohli, Shervani and Challagalla 1998). According to Spiro, Stanton, and Rich (2003, p. 309), "perhaps the most important way in which managers can serve as role models is to personally demonstrate proper selling techniques so that salespeople see how sales calls should be handled." Further, by reminding salespeople of the business strategies pursued by the selling firms, sales managers can help plateaued salespeople to become more productive (Slocum, Hansen and Rawlings 1985).

The effect of experience on the practice of adaptive selling provided an interesting contrast. Although total work experience facilitated adaptive selling, total sales experience did not. Since the total work experience includes the sales experience of respondents, this apparent contradiction on the role of experience in adaptive selling requires further research. It is possible that experienced

salespeople react differently to supervisory behaviors than novices. Salespeople's selling experience has been found to moderate the effects of supervisory behaviors on salespeople's responses (Kohli 1989), and the effects of supervisory orientations on salespeople's goal orientations (Kohli, Shervani and Challagalla 1998). Thus, during sales calls, the behaviors and activities of supervisors may have interacted with the selling experience of salespeople. Kohli (1989, p. 47) recommended that sales supervisors should engage in "adaptive supervision" by adapting their behaviors to the "needs and expectations of individual salespeople."

The results also underscore the importance of education in the practice of adaptive selling. Recruiters of industrial salespeople should continue to use education as a selection criterion. Education was significantly positively related to the practice of adaptive selling, and recruiters of industrial salespeople should not assume that highly educated job applicants are overqualified and are likely to be frustrated with the repetitive tasks of the sales job.

Finally, there were no gender differences in the practice of adaptive selling. The common notion that due to socialization women are more nurturing and obliging than men (Gilligan 1982) was not reflected in the practice of adaptive selling in this study. With regard to selection, training, promotion, and assignment of responsibilities, organizations need not differentiate between male and female salespersons on the assumption that there are inherent gender-specific traits that require men and women to be treated differently. The results of this study confirm earlier findings regarding the lack gender differences in salespeople (Busch and Bush 1978; Levy and Sharma 1994; Schul and Wren 1992).

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The respondents of this study were predominantly male, older, educated and highly

experienced. Although that is typical of industrial salespeople, the results of this study should be interpreted with caution. Replications of this study are needed in other contexts to confirm the role of demographic factors in predicting adaptive selling. Results of the current study were remarkably different from that of Levy and Sharma (1994).

Future research should also explore the relational determinants of adaptive selling in conjunction with demographic factors. For example, Weitz (1981, p. 94) proposed that the relationship between adaptive selling and sales effectiveness is contingent upon customer-salesperson relationships that are "characterized by a low level of conflict and the salesperson anticipates future relationships with the customer." The industrial salespeople of the current study might have anticipated future relationships with their customers to a greater degree compared to the retail salespeople surveyed by Levy and Sharma (1994). In that case, salespeople in the two studies might have engaged in different degrees of adaptive selling, regardless of their gender, age, experience, and education. Giacobbe et al. (2006) reported that in "adaptive" situations, adaptive selling behaviors explained nearly one-third of the variance in sales performance.

Finally, future research should also examine the degree to which the lack of unidimensionality of the 16-item ADAPTS scale might have affected research findings. The differences in the role of demographic factors in predicting adaptive selling in retail and industrial salespeople may be attributed to the measurement of adaptive selling. Replications using the 5-item ADAPTS-SV are needed to resolve this issue.

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