The Impact of Moral Reasoning on the Salespersons Performance

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ABSTRACT

The sales representative’s work environment is more prone to unethical behavior like lying to the customer, not keeping promises and selling ineffective solutions. This may be due to the relative isolation and high pressure in the field.

The objective of this study was to provide an assessment of the existence of a relationship between sales performance and moral reasoning. The survey data was gathered from sales representatives in a telecom company. Findings indicate that except participation in formal ethics training no variable showed correlation between a sales representative’s performance and cognitive moral development. This suggests that participation in ethics training increases the likelihood of a sales representative having a higher level of moral reasoning and can have marked impact on performance.

INTRODUCTION

Sales managers, who work in businesses ranging in size from major corporations to small companies, go to any extents of telling lies, making unrealistic promises, selling such products which customers don’t need on a sales call to make a sale. In addition, salespeople exaggerate more frequently during selling process.

The characteristics that sales personnel need in order to be successful in addition to the understanding and implementation of basic selling skills, are courtesy, ethics, and enthusiasm as beneficial to one’s success. Successful salesmanship requires skill in obtaining referrals, generating repeat business, building a reputable company name, and conducting business activities in an ethical manner. Businesses cannot succeed long-term if their reputation is damaged by the impression that their financial success outweighs ethical behavior.

Ethical behavior exhibited by the salesperson builds trust, facilitates cooperation, and generates buyer commitment. It also aids in the development and maintenance of long-term relationships. Buyers who trust their sales representative will purchase the salesperson’s products, benefiting both the salesperson and the organization. Salespeople who take an unprincipled approach to the profession by lying, selling unnecessary solutions, or breaking promises to customers can cause costly lawsuits, generate negative press, contribute to employee turnover, and weaken market position. The discovery of unethical behavior can lead to job loss and turnover, a particular concern of organizations that employ salespeople. Thus unethical behavior can have a negative impact on both the sales representative and the company. The company’s value in the marketplace can be affected by poor public image and loss of revenue. The sales representative can experience the loss of customer loyalty, of business activity, and potentially of his or her job. Salespeople make decisions each day involving ethical considerations that have the potential to affect their organization, their employment, and their performance. Since salespeople play a critical role in the overall success of an organization, it is important to understand the factors affecting a salesperson’s performance. Salespeople who possess a higher level of moral reasoning are more likely to be successful than those who have a lower level. Thus whether to act ethically or unethically becomes a moral dilemma, Kohlberg (1969, 1981) has theorized that an individual begins with a stage of cognitive moral development that is concerned only for himself or herself as an individual. The individual then progresses through stages to a broader concern for the betterment of society. His theory focuses on the manner in which individuals understand the relationship between their actions and the consequences of those actions on themselves, on others, and on society as a whole. Kohlberg (1969, 1981) describes cognitive moral development as consisting of three levels of moral reasoning: preconventional, conventional, and post conventional (See Table 1.1). Each level contains two stages of development for a total of 6 stages. The post conventional level is the extent to which an individual
considers other’s rights and takes a position for the common good. Cognitive moral development requires an individual to move progressively through these stages of moral reasoning. People who reason at the highest level (post conventional level, Stages 5 and 6) are less apt to cheat and are more likely to help others in distress. For this reason, improving the moral reasoning skills of an organization’s sales force could provide a means for sales organizations to improve ethical behavior.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the study was to extend the understanding of a salesperson’s moral reasoning by examining the relationship between moral reasoning, in the form of cognitive moral development, and sales performance. The study focused on the mental processes that sales representatives use when faced with moral dilemmas. The research employed cognitive moral development theory as the conceptual framework for examining the moral reasoning of study participants. In particular, the study attempted to determine if there was a relationship between a salesperson’s post conventional level (the extent to which a person considers other’s rights and concern for the common good) and sales performance. Additionally, the research attempted to determine if selected demographic variables, including the participation in a formal ethics training class or seminar, were associated with Cognitive moral development.

The problems like the identified unethical practices of some salespeople, the pressures of the sales environment coupled with the relative isolation of salespeople, self-serving decisions are the focus of this study, as these decisions can lead to negative consequences for salespeople, their organization, and the customers they serve. Through the theoretical framework of Cognitive Moral Development, the research goal is to provide insights to managers to help identify the mechanisms to avoid these negative consequences.

Thus this study investigates not only the concurrent relationship between the cognitive moral development of salespeople and their sales performance but also investigates the moderating effect of certain demographic variables on cognitive moral development.

It is suggested that any improvement in sales personnel’s cognitive moral reasoning may cause an increase in ethical behavior and a decrease in unethical behavior in salespeople, which would result in less customer dissatisfaction, increased customer loyalty, and enhanced business reputation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cognitive Moral Development:

Jean Piaget Recognized that the world did not look the same to all people, as the complex mental exercises are utilized in deriving meaning from experience. He theorized that moral development occurs in distinct stages and cognitive development and moral development proceed together. He discovered that cognitive development occurs in a progression of stages he labeled nonmoral, heteronomous, and autonomous.

Later in 1960s, Lawrence Kohlberg (1969), building upon the work of Piaget, recognized that advanced moral reasoning requires advanced logical reasoning capacity. Kohlberg reasoned that moral development should follow the cognitive developmental process. That is, an individual functioning at the lower stages of cognitive thought would be unable to recognize and analyze the complex relationships that exist among all the factors involved in a decision with moral implications. Therefore, the individual would not recognize all of the options and consequences that might result from a particular course of action. As a result, the decision reached would not satisfy a moral ideal by meeting the needs of everyone involved.

According to Kohlberg (1969), cognitive moral development describes the development of moral reasoning in terms of three levels and six stages. Individuals may traverse as many as six stages of moral development in a sequential progression. With each consecutive stage, individuals acquire a broader and more accurate societal perspective; their logical interpretative capabilities increase, and their moral judgments become less dependent upon others’ definitions of the situation. Individuals are thought to advance through these stages toward a better understanding of moral obligations (Rest, 1979).
Over the course of moral development the individual should go through the six stages in consecutive order, without stage skipping or stage reversal (Colby et al., 1983). Table 1 describes CMD Levels and Stages (Kohlberg, 1984, p. 174-176).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>Stages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Preconventional</td>
<td>Stage 1: Heteronomous morality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stage 2: Instrumental purpose and exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Conventional</td>
<td>Stage 3: Mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships, and interpersonal conformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stage 4: Social accord and system maintenance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Postconventional</td>
<td>Stage 5: Social contract and individual rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stage 6: Universal ethical principles</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

CMD levels and stages (Kohlberg, 1984).

MEASURING COGNITIVE MORAL DEVELOPMENT

In an effort to simplify Kohlberg’s methodology for measuring CMD, Rest (1979) developed a new instrument: the Defining Issues Test (DIT). This DIT is based on Kohlberg’s six stages and presents hypothetical ethical dilemmas that are similar to those developed by Kohlberg in his original MJI (1969). Rest analyzed Kohlberg’s interviewing notes and discovered that individuals who were in the same stage demonstrated similar responses to the dilemmas. He created 11 Likert-type behavioral statements representative of each stage and a rank ordering method to determine levels that correlate to Kohlberg’s stages. From that list of behavior statements, respondents selected which one they would choose for each dilemma. The respondents were then asked to prioritize each behavioral statement according to its importance. For each dilemma there is a list of considerations for determining what is right. Individuals rank the four most important considerations. From this ranking, a P score based on Kohlberg’s CMD theory is derived. P scores range from 0 to 95 and indicate the importance the individual gives to principled (Stage 5 and 6) moral reasoning. A higher number indicates higher moral development (Rest, 1986).

The major difference between the DIT and Kohlberg’s MJI is that the DIT is a recognition procedure, whereas Kohlberg’s methodology is a production procedure (Elm & Weber, 1994). The MJI is a production procedure because it utilized in-depth interviews and required expert judges that had to match the verbal statements given by the respondent to a scoring guide. This process was complicated and time consuming.

The DIT, in contrast, had respondents read various ethical dilemmas and recognize from a list of behavioral statements the desired action (Fraedrich et al., 1994). Because participants usually find multiple-choice selection, identifying the most important statement (DIT), easier than trying to come up with the answer themselves (Kohlberg methodology), the DIT credits participants with more advanced thinking than does the Kohlberg test (Rest, 1986). However, lacking the detailed description the MJI provided, the DIT sacrifices some of the richness of the constructs being analyzed, thus raising the issue of whether one measure yields more accurate data than the other (Fraedrich et al., 1994).

Schwepker and Ingram (1996) found that moral reasoning has a positive relationship with certain areas of performance. A self-report measure developed by Behrman and Perreault (1982) was used to measure four dimensions of performance: (a) success in achieving quantity and quality sales objectives, (b) development and use of technical knowledge/sales presentations, (c) providing information, and (d) controlling unnecessary expenses. They found from a sample of industrial salespeople that there is a significant relationship between moral reasoning and performance for three of the four dimensions. The one area that was not related to moral judgment was the providing information dimension, which involved turning in accurate and timely reports.

However, Schwepker and Ingram (1996) realized that there was a large amount of variance in job performance that cannot all be explained through moral reasoning. The researchers believe it is difficult to isolate the multitude of factors proposed to affect performance. In addition, the researchers did not use the Defining Issues Test for measurement. Their measurement instrument was the Multidimensional Ethics Scale, which is popular but not without its problems. Those
problems include: (a) the instrument is not connected to an ethical theory, (b) few details are included for each scenario, and (c) given responses are not framed to level of importance (Hansen, 1992).

**SPECIFIC DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES**

This study looked at five variables that have some relevance through prior research to CMD. These are (a) previous sales experience, (b) highest degree earned, (c) Specialization, (d) income, and (e) participation in a formal ethics session or seminar.

Below is a brief overview of the research literature related to these variables:

(a) **Previous sales experience**: Trevino (1986) suggests that work experience plays a significant part in continued adult moral development because it provides opportunities for role taking and the responsibility for resolving moral dilemmas in the workplace. This stance is similar to Kohlberg’s longitudinal research showing that most adults continue their cognitive moral development beyond their years in school (Colby, Kohlberg, Gibbs & Berkowitz, 1983). However, Izzo (2000) found in his research with real estate salespeople that prior experience does not necessarily have a positive relationship with CMD. Prior experience was found to be a key predictor of success when it is regressed with the variables income and job status. When Kelley et al. (1990) were surveying marketing professionals, they found that those salespeople holding positions for 10 years or longer considered their behavior more ethical than those with lesser experience.

(b) **Highest degree earned** Rest (1975) found that graduates demonstrated higher levels of CMD than those who did not go to college. This was consistent with Coder’s (1975) findings that students who continue on in graduate school have much higher P scores than those who do not attend graduate school.

Table 2 provides a comparison of average DIT P scores of various student groups and the general population (Rest, & Narvaez, 1994, p. 14).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P – Score</th>
<th>Group</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>Moral philosophy and political science graduate students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59.8</td>
<td>Liberal protestants seminarians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52.2</td>
<td>Law students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49.2</td>
<td>Practicing physicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>Dental students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>Staff nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.8</td>
<td>Graduate students in business</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>College students in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.6</td>
<td>Navy enlisted men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>Adults in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>Senior high school students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>Prison inmates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.9</td>
<td>Junior high school students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>Institutionalized delinquents</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hau and Lew (1989) determined that university students attached greater importance to higher levels of cognitive moral development than do the younger secondary school students. Hau and Lew (1989) also determined that university students achieved a higher level, Stages 5 and 6 (postconventional) reasoning than did the younger secondary school students. This supports that cognitive moral development increases with educational level and is in agreement with Kohlberg’s stages of pre-conventional, conventional, and postconventional levels. Empirical research using the DIT has shown that an individual’s moral maturity level will increase as (a) one gets older, (b) is exposed to higher level of interaction with peers,

(c) **Specialization**. Research suggests that an individual’s major in school may impact that person’s level of moral reasoning. Ponemon and Glazer (1990) found that accounting students who were enrolled in a liberal arts curriculum at
a liberal arts college had a higher level of CMD than students who were not enrolled in a liberal arts curriculum. However, Jeffery (1993) found that seniors majoring in liberal arts did not have higher levels of CMD than seniors in accounting or other business majors.

(d) Income. Research on the effects of income on moral reasoning also has demonstrated mixed results (Izzo, 2000). According to Schwepker and Ingram (1996), there is a positive relationship between moral reasoning and those sales representatives who earn more than $40,000 dollars a year. This holds true for any combination of compensation, salary and commission. When studying residential real estate salespeople, Izzo (2000) found that CMD is positively related to income. From the research, those salespeople who are low in CMD do not appear to be more successful when measured in terms of income or job status. Fin, Chonko and Hunt (1988) found that high-income accountants perceived fewer ethical issues than did their colleagues at lower levels of income. However, no theoretical rationale for this finding is known. and (c) engages in more sophisticated discussions.

(e) Ethics training. There are training interventions that seem to elevate an individual’s moral reasoning patterns to better integrate the interests of others in their decisions. Many of these training programs focus on moral judgment, the second component of the four psychological processes. Much of the research has been targeted at increasing moral judgment by the use of moral dilemmas. Baxter and Rarick (1987) suggest that training interventions can advance individuals’ moral reasoning patterns, allowing them to better integrate the interests of other stakeholders in their decisions. Studies have been conducted to determine if increases in CMD can be tied to training programs aimed at helping participants to think through morally controversial dilemmas. A number of these studies have shown positive results (Power et al., 1989; Rest 1986).

**METHODOLOGY**

A review of the literature supports that moral reasoning is fundamental to ethical decision-making. We have focused on cognitive moral development as a method to better understand the moral reasoning of a person who is faced with an ethical dilemma. Major emphasis in the research has focused on Lawrence Kohlberg’s six stage theory of cognitive moral development. This study examines the factors that may contribute to ethical decision-making by salespersons. Specifically, the study explores the relationship between cognitive moral development and sales performance. It also investigates the effect of selected demographic variables and participation in ethics training on CMD and performance.

**RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

Keeping in mind the following objectives:
1. To study the concurrent relationship between the post conventional level of cognitive moral development and a salesperson’s performance as measured by the three-year average sales quota achieved.
2. To study whether there is relationship between the post conventional level of cognitive moral development and a salesperson’s performance moderated by selected salesperson’s demographic variables; educational major, highest education degree earned, income, and sales experience.
3. To know if there is a difference in the post conventional level of cognitive moral development and a salesperson’s performance based on participation in ethics training.

**HYPOTHESES**

The following Hypotheses were proposed:

**H1:** There is no concurrent relationship between a salesperson’s three-year average sales quota achieved and the postconventional level of cognitive moral development.
H2: There is no relationship between the postconventional level of cognitive moral development and a salesperson’s performance by level of income, by years of sales experience, by highest education degree earned, performance by educational major.

H3: There is no difference in the postconventional level of cognitive moral development and a salesperson’s performance by having participated in a formal ethics training class or seminar, and its perceived usefulness.

METHODS AND PROCESSES

The research methods and procedures include questionnaire development deciding on sample size and, data collection and analysis.

INSTRUMENTATION

Two Questionnaires were developed for this study based on Defining issue test 2 (DIT 2) as explained in literature reviews. Further, the first questionnaire was referred as MDQ (the Moral Dilemma Questionnaire) in this research study. It consisted of a test of five dilemmas that takes approximately 35 to 45 minutes to complete. Results were derived from the rating and ranking that respondents give to the level of importance for each of the statements following the moral dilemma. The purpose of the scoring was to measure the degree to which a person is thinking at the postconventional level (Stages 5 and 6) or to what extent the person considered others’ rights and follows universal truths.

Literature review regarding DIT 2 mentions the P scores. This P score measures the degree to which the person is thinking at the postconventional level. Similarly based on this we have utilized M scores that is based on the opinion of the respondents.

The other questionnaire was named as Demographic Questionnaire (DQ). The purpose was to measure variables identified in the literature review that may influence Cognitive Moral Development and sales performance. This questionnaire consisted of eight questions that focus on income, educational specialization highest education degree earned, years of sales experience, and participation in a formal ethics session or seminar. As a pretest for pragmatic validity, a panel of five Sales Managers to review the questions that focused on background data and performance. No changes were necessary after the panel’s review. A Regional Manager for the company tested the scale, wording, and comprehension of the questions geared to performance. Performance was measured in two ways: the three-year average sales quota achieved and having won a major performance award. Both measurements were specifically relevant to the organization. The Regional Manager approved the design of these questions with one exception; the scale for the three-year average quota achieved was reduced to encourage differentiation between categories.

SAMPLE SIZE

The salespeople for this study are employed by a telecom company and these sales personnel promote and sell their line of products by calling on corporate clients their product sales are usually built on relationships developed by sharing information regarding telecom services. A random sample of 63 salespeople that cover Jaipur, Rajasthan, India were identified.

DATA COLLECTION

The data were gathered from a sample of 63 sales representatives of a large telecom company whose sales territory was Jaipur, Rajasthan, India. Cognitive moral development was determined by having the participants complete the Questionnaires regarding moral dilemma & demographics. The relative importance that the respondent gave to specific statements in regards to a moral dilemma were analyzed and scored to determine the participants’ morality stage(s). The score is represented with a numerical score 0-95 (it is the sum of scores from CMD Stages 5 and 6 refer literature review). A demographic questionnaire completed by sales representatives reported their income; highest education
degree earned, specialization area, years of sales experience, and participation in a formal ethics training session or seminar.

The completed questionnaires were put to test the study hypotheses; both parametric and non-parametric statistical measures were used to analyze the scores and the responses.

**DATA ANALYSIS**

**For H1:** The variable Quota measures a salesperson’s performance level. This variable was reported in a categorical format with possible responses ranging from over 105% to below 85%. The M score variable (based on P scores; refer literature review) measured a person’s cognitive moral development Stage 5 and 6 (postconventional level). It is an interval variable ranging from 0-95.

A non-parametric test, the Spearman Correlation, was performed to determine if the mean M score differed significantly among each of the quota/performance levels.

**For H2:** For the relationship between the postconventional level of cognitive moral development and a salesperson’s performance moderated by selected salesperson’s demographic variables; educational major, highest education degree earned, income and sales experience A Kruskal Wallis test was performed for the variables educational major, highest education degree earned and income. This test is the non-parametric equivalent to an ANOVA. For the variable sales experience a Pearson Correlation was used. In addition, a multiple least squares regression assessed how well the demographic variables were at explaining the dependent variable, CMD.

**H3:** For the difference in the post conventional level of cognitive moral development and a salesperson’s performance based on participation in ethics training was analyzed in a similar fashion as research question two. No correlation existed between performance and CMD so an ANOVA was employed; however, the perceived usefulness of the ethics training was measured using a sub-sample of the original sample. A Kruskal Wallis test was conducted with only those salespeople who answered in the affirmative that they had participated in a formal ethics session or seminar were included.

Further H1 also examined the relationship between sales performance and the postconventional level of CMD by using the three-year average sales quota achieved. An additional sales performance measure, those sales representatives who had won a performance award, was also analyzed. An ANOVA was used to analyze the results.

**FINDINGS**

The outcome of the study identified one variable that had a positive relationship with cognitive moral development. Those sales representatives who had participated in a formal ethics training session or seminar had a significantly higher Moral score (M) score than those that had not experienced this training. No other variable, performance quota, educational specialization, highest education degree earned, income and sales experience had a positive relationship with the postconventional level of cognitive moral development.

The results are summarized as below:

1. There is no statistically significant relationship between a sales representative’s three-year average sales quota achieved and the postconventional level of cognitive moral development.
2. There is no statistically significant relationship between a sales representative’s level of income and the postconventional level of cognitive moral development.
3. There is no statistically significant relationship between a sales representative’s highest education degree earned and the postconventional level of cognitive moral development.
4. There is no statistically significant relationship between a sales representative’s educational specialization and the postconventional level of cognitive moral development.
5. There is no statistically significant relationship between a sales representative’s years of sales experience and the postconventional level of cognitive moral development.
6. There is a statistically significant relationship between those sales representatives that had participated in a formal ethics session or seminar and the postconventional level of cognitive moral development.

7. There is no statistically significant relationship between a sales representative’s perceived effectiveness of ethics training and the postconventional level of cognitive moral development.

This study found no relationship between a sales representative’s three-year average sales quota and the postconventional level of cognitive moral development. This means that a high level of moral reasoning did not correlate with higher performance.

Schwepker and Ingram (1996) found that performance, when defined as achieving quantity and quality of sales objectives, use of technical knowledge in sales presentations, and controlling unnecessary expenses were all related to higher levels of moral reasoning. These previous studies then would invoke the expectation that having a higher level of moral reasoning would lead to a higher percentage of quotas or other sales performance. This would largely be due to building customer trust by not breaking promises and by demonstrating other ethical practices.

But on the contrary, the present study results reveal that a sales representative need not have a higher level of moral reasoning (M score) in order to achieve a high performance level. The sample population had a low average M score (28.96) compared to the general population. This may demonstrate that many sales representatives who had a higher level of moral reasoning had selected out of the sales representative position altogether. The unethical environment that may be necessary to succeed in sales may not have been tolerable to these sales representatives. This study shows no relationship between a sales representative’s highest education degree earned and the postconventional level of cognitive moral development.

Further, the sample size chosen for this study consisted of sales representatives from only one company based on researchers’ convenience, and the explanation of why highest education degree earned did not show a relationship could be that sales people in general have lower moral reasoning score (M scores) than the general population. Hence the education level doesn’t have an impact on moral reasoning of people who are naturally inclined to be sales representatives.

Further, it was found that there is a positive relationship between participation in formal ethics training and a higher moral reasoning (M) score or postconventional level of cognitive moral development. It was demonstrated that, after participating in a course in ethics, an individual’s stage of cognitive moral development had increased relative to the stage measured prior to the class. This suggested that individual moral reasoning could be influenced through ethics training.

**LIMITATIONS**

The following are factors that contributed to limitations of the study.

1. The limitation was sample size. The sample in this study was limited to 63 respondents of telecom sales representatives of Jaipur, Rajasthan. As a result, the categories for certain variables in the study did not have a level of response that was adequate to include in analysis. In addition, comparisons could not be made across certain variables due to the low number of responses.

2. The quota percentage range was also a limitation. The demographic questionnaire asked participants to select a particular range of quota percentages, such as “90% to 94%”, instead of asking for their specific quota percentage. This caused a lack of quantitative data with regard to sales quotas. In addition, not all of the range choices were equally spaced. For example, the upper range was “105 or above” which, because it had not upper bound, was not the same width as the other categories.

3. The limitation was little variation in sales performance. The sales representatives in the study sample were at or above 95% of quota. As a result, there was no opportunity to analyze the moral reasoning of sales representatives who had achieved a lower percentage of quotas.
RECOMMENDATIONS

The study gathered information that may be helpful in understanding as to what factors impact moral reasoning. As a result, the following recommendations were proposed:

1. In order to create an environment for ethical decision making, the organization should take proactive steps to implement and support ethics training programs.

2. When recruiting prospective employees, a manager might want to consider asking specific questions that address the completion of an ethics session or seminar (perhaps include it on application forms) to increase the probability of hiring a person of high moral reasoning.

3. From a personal development perspective, sales representatives who want to increase their moral reasoning (i.e., to build customer trust and/or greater self-awareness) should be given the opportunity to participate in an ethics training class or seminar.

4. Even though moral reasoning did not correlate with high performance in this study, the sales manager should not dismiss the possible impact of moral reasoning on loss of revenue due to employee turnover, lying to customers or purposely selling ineffective solutions. Moral reasoning, measured by the P score, may have a positive correlation with these types of variables even though they were not measured here.

5. This study is important because it suggests that ethics training could play a vital role in increasing moral development. If an individual could increase his or her moral reasoning skills by moving toward principled thinking, his or her ethical decision-making would be enhanced. This would possibly contribute to a reduction in workplace turnover, an increase in customer trust, forging long-term relationships, and generating additional sales revenue. Such enhancements would benefit both the sales representative and the organization.

CONCLUSION

Results of this study demonstrate that there is a positive relationship between formal ethics training and the postconventional level of cognitive moral development. However, there is no relationship with specific sales performance (the three-year average sales quota achieved) or with the demographic variables of income, sales experience, educational major, highest education degree earned, and the perceived effectiveness of ethics training. Additional studies are needed to determine if other measures of performance have an impact on cognitive moral development. This may involve larger and more diverse sample sizes, alternative collection methods, and multiple organizations.

*The Tabulated data and the Questionnaire can be requested from the authors if required.

REFERENCES


