

## St. MARY'S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

## THE IMPACT OF SALES SKILLS ON PERSONAL SELLING PERFORMANCE:

## THE CASE OF PESTICIDE IMPORTERS AND DISTRIBUTORS (B2B) SALES AGRONOMISTS,

BY:

DAWIT BANCHA BALCHA

**JUNE, 2019** 

ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA

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A THESIS SUBMITTED TO ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY, SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN MARKETING MANAGEMENT

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**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIC** 

## ST. MARY'S UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES FACULTY OF BUSINESS

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#### DAWIT BANCHA BALCHA

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#### **Declaration**

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work, prepared under the guidance of Mesfin Workineh (PhD). All sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged. Moreover, I confirm that the thesis has not been submitted either in part or in full to any other higher learning institution for the purpose of earning any degree. It is submitted for the partial fulfillment of the MA degree in Marketing Management.

Dawit Bancha Balcha	
May, 2019	

#### **ENDORSMENT**

This is to certify that Dawit Bancha has carried out his study work on the topic entitled "The Impact of Sales Skills on Personal Selling Performance: The Case of Pesticide Importers And Distributors (B2b) Sales Agronomists," under my guidance and supervision. Accordingly, I hereby assure that his work is appropriate and standard enough to be submitted for the award of Master of Degree in Marketing Management.

Name of Advisor	Signature and Date
Mesfin Workineh (PhD).	

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#### Acronyms

**B2B** - Business to business

 $\boldsymbol{TS}$  - Technical skill IS - Interpersonal skill

**MK** - Marketing skill

SS - Salesmanship skill

**SP** - Sales Person performance

#### Abstract

This study is conducted with a purpose of identifying effect of personal selling skills on sales performance of salesperson in agrochemical importer and distributors. Technical, interpersonal, marketing and salesmanship skills were used as dimensions of sales skills in agrochemical importers and distributors. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Census method (Purposive sampling) was used to conclude the final sample size. Data was collected from all active population of the study, 43 supervisors working for agrochemical importer and distributors found in Ethiopia based in Addis Ababa. All the dimensions of sales skills used in the study had statistically significant effect on sales performance of the sales persons. All the variables, technical, marketing, interpersonal and salesmanship skills have positive significant effect on sales performance of the salesperson in the company. Based on the finding it is recommended to increase technical, interpersonal marketing and salesmanship skills to increase sales performance.

**Key words**: sales skills, sales performance, Technical skill, interpersonal skill, marketing skill, salesmanship skills

#### **CHAPTER ONE**

#### INTRODUCTION

The chapter contains an overview of the whole thesis. It covers the background of the study, statement of the problem, research question, aim, and objectives of the study, hypothesis, and scope of the study, the significance of the study, limitations of the study and operational definition of terms.

#### 1.1. Background of the Study

As competition increases and technology advances, organizations continue to seek ways to adjust to changing business environments. This is especially true in the personal selling context where salespeople are recognized as the boundary spanners and are expected to be relationship managers (Rapp, Agnihotri, & Forbes, 2008). According to Meredith (2009), personal selling is defined as an interpersonal process whereby a seller tries to uncover and satisfy a buyer's needs in a mutually, long-term beneficial manner suitable for both parties. Since buyers require the help of the salesperson in solving technical problems and because the buyer negotiated with the supplier, the salesperson should have good sales performance.

There are many reasons that contribute to salesperson performance. Nevertheless, scholars have confirmed that sales skills possessed by salesperson play crucial roles in sales performance. Sales skill has recognized as one of the most important variables in explaining personal selling performance (Churchill, Ford, Hartley, & Walker, 1985). And, added that "while differing sales situation, markets conditions, product types, etc. all likely affect which factors contribute to sales success, one of the most striking and important commonalities across differing explanations of salesperson job performance is the importance each ascribes to selling skill". A top-quality salesperson who maximizes revenues from current existing customers and systematically identifies and manages new prospects will allow a business entity to grow faster than its competitors (Basir, Ahmad, & Kitchen, 2010). This kind of energies is particularly important in a situation where most customers have many options and choices than ever before. Moreover, many researchers have emphasized the importance of salesperson's skills level on salesperson performance (Churchill et al., 1985; Churchill et al., 2000; Basir et al., 2010).

Agrochemicals introduced in Ethiopia in the 19640s. Private and public companies have been engaging in the import of different types of pesticides for agricultural uses. Since then, the use of agrochemicals and pesticides has increased rapidly for crop protection (Mengistie, 2016). Currently(2019), there are around 66 registered agrochemical importers and distributors in the country and each importer and distributor has at least one salesperson working as a sales agent for the imported agrochemicals. Therefore, there exists high competition between these agrochemical importers and distributors to sell products to wholesale and retailing shops all over the country and in some cases to the big commercial farmers.

#### 1.2. Statement of the Problem

With the presence of high competition in the agrochemical dealers, it is decisive for each agrochemical importer and distributor to inspect the influence of sales skills dimensions on salesperson performance about which Churchill et al. (1985) have identified those individual-level skills that significantly contribute to salesperson performance.

According to Baldauf & Cravens (2002) salespersons are the most vital marketing tools in the edge between the company and its customers. Furthermore, Baldauf and Cravens (2002) noted that a top-quality salesperson who makes the most of revenues from current existing customers systematically identifies, and manages new prospects would allow a business entity to grow faster than its competitors would.

Hence, information on the determining factors of salesperson performance, as proposed by Ingram et al. (2004) and Churchill et al. (2000) help each agrochemical importer and distributor to formulate innovative sales strategies; effective salesperson training and development programs; and selection and recruitment policies which in turn might result in attractive salesperson performance in selling agrochemical products offered by the companies.

The four dimensions of selling skills are used for this study; interpersonal skills, salesmanship skills, technical skills, and marketing skills. The first three dimensions adopted from Rentz et al., (2002); which found to be useful predictors of sales performance and the fourth-dimension marketing skill adopted from Aherne and Schilleweart (2000).

Therefore, the current study arouses from a need to increased understanding of factors that positively contribute to salesperson performance of the agrochemical importing and distributing industry salespersons. As to my knowledge, there is no published literature regarding the agrochemical importing and distributing industry associated with selling skill on sales performance in Ethiopia.

Thus, the purpose of the present research is to examine the relationship between sales skills dimensions namely Interpersonal skills, Salesmanship skills, Technical skills, and Marketing skills and Salesperson performance in the agrochemical importing and distributing industry and further utilize the findings of the present study to improve the performance of salespersons in the industry.

#### 1.3. Research Questions

The attention of the current study was to observe the relationship between salespersons (Sales agronomist) sales skills dimensions namely interpersonal skills, salesmanship skills technical skills and marketing skills on salesperson performance in an attempt to answer the following research questions:

#### 1.3.1. Main Question

• How do personal selling skills affect sales performance?

#### 1.3.2. Sub-questions

- What kind of sales skills possessed by the sales persons?
- Do interpersonal skills affect salesperson performance?
- Do salesmanship skills affect salesperson performance?
- Do technical skills affect salesperson performance?
- Do marketing skills affect salesperson performance?

#### 1.4. The objective of the Study

The general objective of the study was to examine the relationship between sales skills and sales person's performance.

Specifically, the study has the following objectives:

• To identify the extent to which salespersons are equipped with sales skills

• To determine the relationship between the four sales skill dimensions and salesperson

performance of agrochemical importing and distributing companies.

1.5. Research Hypothesis

**H1:** Technical skill has an impact on salespersons' performance.

**H4:** Marketing skill has an impact on salespersons' performance.

**H3:** Interpersonal skill has an impact on salespersons' performance.

**H4:** Salesmanship skill has an impact on salespersons' performance.

1.6. Significance of the Study

The study has practical and theoretical significances. It has the following practical significance for the agrochemical importing and distributing industry: the study further identifies sales skills which are highly relevant for the industry and the training need areas for sales skills. Apart from these, the study will benefit the agrochemical companies through identifying the key success factors in agrochemical personal selling. Theoretical implications of the research include gaining an understanding of how a sales skills dimension affects salesperson performance. Above all, it can be a benchmark for further studies.

1.7. Scope of the Study

The study aimed at identifying the extent to which salespersons are equipped with wide-ranging sales skills and determining the relationship between the four sales skill dimensions and salesperson performance of agrochemical importing and distributing companies' salespersons. With regard to the unit of analysis and geographical area, the study is limited to single industry salespersons, which is agrochemical importers and distributors based in Addis Ababa.

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#### 1.8. Limitation of the Study

Though sales person's performance affected by many other variables including personality factors, role variables, motivation, aptitude, and organizational factors, this study has limited itself on assessing the relationship between sales skills dimensions and salesperson performance. In addition, the research is limited on supervisory level data collection but It would be better if researchers in the area would employed both supervisory and self-reported method of data collection and if cross comparisons were made between the two groups.

The number of registered and licensed agrochemical importers and distributors in the country are 66 in number. From the total about 23 are new and yet not in the market, due to this case the study forced to use the census-sampling method.

#### 1.9. Organization of the Study

The study is composed of five chapters. Chapter One covers the introduction part and chapter Two reviews of related literature. Chapter Three and Four discusses the research design and methodology, and data analysis, result, and discussion respectively. Chapter Five is about summary, conclusion, and recommendation.

#### **CHAPTER TWO**

#### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.1Theoretical Review

#### 2.1.1 Definition of Terms

**Interpersonal skill:** refer to mental and communication algorithms applied during social communication and interaction to achieve certain effects and results (Ahmed et al., 2010). According to Rentz et al, (2002) as cited in Ahmad et al., (2010) the dimensions of interpersonal skill are listening, empathy, optimism, and perceived observation skills.

**Technical Knowledge:** refers to salesperson skill in proceeding information about design and specification of products and the applications and functions of both the products and services (Ahmed et al., 2010).

**Marketing skill:** refers to knowledge about the industry and trends in general such as customers, markets and products; competitors' products, services, sales policies; knowledge of competitors' products lines, and knowledge of customer operations (Behrman and Perreault, 1982 as cited Ahmed et al., 2010).

**Salesmanship skill:** refers to adaptability, consultative selling, negotiation and questioning, and sales person's cues and communication style skills.

**Salesperson performance:** a performance that salespersons expertise in their company's products and the market, good communication skill, ability to solve problems, ability to understand and satisfy the buyer's needs, thoroughness and ability to help in ensuring the reliable and fast delivery of orders, Jobber, David (1947).

**Performance:** Two distinct ways of defining performance: On one hand, Campbell (1991) defined performance as behavior relevant to the organization's goals. He also suggested that when behavior is not observable, its effects could only know performance that is sales. On the other hand, Kane (1986, p.137) defined performance as "the record of outcomes achieved in carrying out the job function during the specified period." Whereas Campbell emphasized

behaviors, Kane emphasized outcomes. In a selling situation, sales volume is compatible with both definitions. Thus, the behavior of the salesperson and their sales volume should be interrelated.

**Agrochemical:** An agrochemical or agrichemical, Is a chemical used in agriculture. In most cases, agrichemical refers to pesticides including insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, and nematicides.

A number of independent variables that influence salesperson performance have been identified by numerous studies (see Churchill et al., 1985; Baldauf and Cravens, 1999; 2002; Piercy et. al., 1997; 1998; Baldauf et. al., 2001; Babakus, et. al., 1996; Barker, 1999; Rentz et. al., 2002). According to Churchill et al. (1985) in terms of the average size of their association with salesperson performance, the determinants of salesperson performance ordered as follows: role variables, selling skills, motivation, personal factors, aptitude, and organizational factors.

The results of Churchill's et. al. (1985) research indicated that selling skills were the second most important of the five variables, both in terms of average size association with performance and in terms of real variation. With respect to this, the present study examines the relationship between selling skills dimensions (interpersonal skills, salesmanship skills, technical skills, and marketing skills) and salesperson performance.

#### **2.1.2 Selling**

Philip Kotler in his book "The Principle of Marketing", argue selling as one of the oldest professions in the world. The people who do the selling are gone by many names such as salespeople, sales representative, account executive, sales consultant, sales engineers, agents, district managers, and account development representatives. However, according to Pederson, Wright, & Weitz, 1988, the theory of selling that influence and persuasion are only a part of selling. Selling is also involved in helping the customer identify the problems, supplying information on potential solutions, and proving after-the-sales-service to ensure long-term satisfaction. Thus, the selling itself it is not only just create a sales or make customer making a purchase, but selling is also the process of understanding customer main problem, help them to understand that problem, solve the problem with the product or service which we offer, and also maintaining the relationship for long term valuable relation.

Jobber & Lancaster, 2009 Selling is the simplest way to think of nature function to make a sale. Selling is often a very complex process to make a sale, involving the use of a whole set of principle, technique and substantial personal skill, and covering a wide range of different types of selling task. Selling is a conceptual approach to the simplest "how it is done," approach which has, mean to understand the way to finish the selling activity by making a deal as a success of the selling process. Some companies spend large sums of 10 money to train their salesperson in order to master the art of selling, that is why selling become the most important link within the company and customer. Selling is the activity that performs by a company or organization with using a workforce which is called a salesperson, sales force, or salesperson to do both selling function and organizational function (Marshall & Johnston, Relationship Selling and Sales Management, 2005).

#### 2.1.3 Personal Selling

Achumba, (2000) describes personal selling as an oral presentation in a conversation with one or more buyers for making sales. The New Zealand Qualification Authority, (2008) defined personal selling as retail and wholesale sales activities in which a salesperson actively presents products to customers in seeking to make a sale. It could also be said, the presentation of goods and services before the customers and convincing or persuading them to buy the products or services. Kotler and Armstrong, (2008) posit that personal selling is the personal communication between a firm's sales force and customers for the purpose of making sales and building customer relationship. Kotler and Armstrong, (2008) and Kotler and Keller, (2009) submitted that personal selling is one of the oldest profession in the world. In fact, its development linked to the period of a trade by barter, when people exchanges goods for other goods (Osuagwu, 2002).

Personal selling is a unique element of marketing communication. Unlike advertising and sales promotion, which focus is to create awareness about the existence of a product or service and provide information as to the features of the products, its availability and price on a mass basis, personal selling is an individualistic approach that designed to meet the specific need of prospects. It is usually directed to specific market segments. It goes beyond the fundamental role of marketing communication; it plays a significant role in the entire exchange process. That is, participating in the activities of each of the other elements of the marketing mix, especially

distribution (place). According to the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (2008), personal selling performs several activities including identifying customer needs and requirements, demonstrating products, use of selling techniques, use of sales aids, making sales pitches, overcoming objections, closing sales, completing documentation, receiving payments, recording sales, using sales technologies, providing after-sales services, following up sales, and sales analysis. However, essential elements of personal selling according to (Palmer, 2005) include; face - to - face interaction, persuasion, flexibility, promotion of sales, the supply of Information and mutual benefit. Personal selling described as the personal communication of information to persuade a prospective customer to buy something a good, service, idea, or something else. (Futrell, 1992 as cited in Jaramillo & Marshall, 2003). Jaramillo and Marshall (2003) believe that personal selling messages have the potential to be more persuasive than advertising or publicity due to face-to-face communication with customers. Brooksbank (1995) suggests that personal selling is a critical component of marketing success. He defines the personal selling process as the positioning of goods or services in the mind of a particular prospective customer. (Brooksbank, 1995, p. 63 as cited in Jaramillo & Marshall, 2003).

Personal selling is defined by Weitz, Castleberry, and Tanner (1998) as an interpersonal process whereby a seller tries to uncover and satisfy a buyer's needs in a mutually, long-term beneficial manner suitable for both parties (as Cited in; Meredith, 2009). Personal selling is differentiated from other sales and marketing channels like telemarketing, catalogs, and the internet because it involves face to face communication (Soldow & Thomas, 1984). When increasing numbers of companies are attempting to build deep, meaningful, and long-term relationships with their customers, personal selling is the only communication vehicle that allows a marketing message to be adapted and tailored to the specific needs, wants, and beliefs of the individual (Weitz, 1978).

Consultative selling, value-added selling, professional selling, needs satisfaction selling, customer-oriented selling, strategic selling, relationship selling, solution selling, and partnering are all terms commonly used incongruence, and often interchangeably, to describe the personal selling process (Marone & Lunsford, 2005). Personal selling is a social situation involving two persons in a communication dyad (Evans, 1963) and success results in how well both parties achieve a common understanding that will enable mutual goal fulfillment through social

interaction (Webster, 1968 as cited in Meredith, 2009). A sales representative's skill and efforts are especially important whereby good skills and effort are more effective than poor skills and effort especially for complex, new products as well as presentations from sales representations from lesser-known organizations (Levitt, 1967 as cited in Meredith, 2009). The ability to customize and tailor messaging as well as developing relationships with customers is where the concept of personal selling was derived. The opportunity to tailor make presentations for each selling situation and customer is an advantage unique to personal selling (Meredith, 2009).

#### 2.1.4 The Personal Selling Process

Personal selling is not one time process; rather it is processed taking several steps. As revised by Marshal & Moncrief (2005), there are seven steps of selling and some of the topical discussion of each selling step that one might find in most sales textbook. The Seven Steps are reviewed by Marshal & Moncrief (2005) as Follows:

#### 2.1.4.1. Prospecting

Prospecting is the method by which salespeople search for new customers and potential customers. One obvious reason for prospecting is to expand the customer base, which is important that most sales organizations lose customers every year (Jolson & Wotruba, 1992 as cited in Marshal and Moncrief, 2005). Sales textbooks typically discuss methods of prospecting, such as referrals, networking, bird-dogging, cold canvassing, and numerous others. Prospecting usually includes a discussion of qualifying the prospect and thus developing some type of screening procedure.

Traditionally, salespeople were expected to find their own prospects. Prospecting was an essential and large part of the selling job and for many salespeople, this was the most difficult and tedious part of the job. In fact, it is an aspect of sales jobs that have chased off many would be salespeople.

#### 2.1.4.2. Pre-approach

The pre-approach step includes all post prospecting activities prior to the actual visit with a prospect or customer. The pre-approach step occurs in virtually every sales call. Sellers are doing their research on the prospect or customer, familiarizing themselves with the customer's needs, reviewing previous correspondence, and pulling together any other new and relevant material that might be appropriate for bringing to the sales call itself. Pre-approach activities also include talking with gatekeepers, doing homework on the customer (individual and organization), mentally preparing for the approach and presentation (rehearsal), and breading the customer's office on entry.

#### **2.1.4.3.** Approach

The approach usually takes the first minute or minutes of a sale. It consists of the strategies and tactics employed by salespeople when gaining an audience and establishing initial rapport with the customer. The approach includes opening small talk, the handshake, eye contact, and generally making a good initial impression. Most sales textbooks include a variety of different approaches that could be used, including the introductory approach, the assessment approach, the product approach, the consumer - benefit approach, the referral approach, the consultative approach, and many others.

#### 2.1.4.4. Presentation

The presentation is the main body of the sales call and should occur after the salesperson has predetermined the needs of the customer. This step can be one presentation or multiple presentations over a period of time. Goals for the sales presentation will vary. First - time buyers must get sufficient information to adequately understand the product's benefits, which may be facilitated by building the presentation around a product demonstration. Selling points and attributes are visualized and built around a call agenda or sales proposal. This step can be complex, and preparation is essential. Overcoming objections, Objections can be broadly defined as customer questions and hesitancies about the product or company. Salespeople should expect that objections will be encountered in every sales presentation. A number of reasons exist for objections, and despite the fact that objections can delay the sales process, for the most part, they should be perceived in a positive sense as useful. This is because by revealing objections, true

buyer needs can be uncovered. In the early days of selling, sales objections were viewed mostly as a hurdle that salespeople had to overcome to get to the ultimate sale. In more modern times, a true objection might be viewed as a sign not to pursue the sale further because a need may not be met with a given product.

#### 2.1.4.5. Close

The close is defined as the successful completion of the sales presentation culminating in a commitment to buy the good or service. Once any objections have been successfully overcome, the salesperson must actually ask for the business and thus begin the process of closing the sale. This step traditionally has been trumpeted as difficult for many salespeople (especially new salespeople) because many simply do not ask for the order.

#### 2.1.4.6. Follow - up

The follow -up step is a relatively newer addition to the steps of selling in which the salesperson does not assume the sale is over with the acceptance of an order. Rather, much work begins after the sale to make sure the customer is happy with the product/ service and that everything that was promised is being delivered. Examples that are frequently given include a thank - you letter to the customer or a follow - up phone call to ensure the customer is happy.

#### 2.1.5 B2B Personal Selling

For many firms, especially in business - to - business markets, personal selling is the dominant element in the marketing communications mix and the key to implementing marketing strategy successfully. One important advantage of personal selling is that the selling pitch can be adjusted and individualized to the prospect. Once you determine the prospect's needs, you tailor the sales pitch. Unfortunately, personal selling is extremely expensive. Door - to - door selling is disappearing in the area of consumer marketing (Friedman, 2011). This is, however, not true in the area of business - to -business (B2B) marketing. Companies selling complex products such as printing presses, buses, jets, computer systems, power plants, and other expensive "installations" usually use salespeople to sell their products (Friedman, 2011). These salespeople are compensated quite well and a large number of them are college graduates. When selling complex, costly products B2B (business - to - business), personal selling is extremely important. Personal selling is also important where prices have to be negotiated and the sale involves a great

deal of money (Friedman, 2011). A key disadvantage of personal selling is that it is costly and you have to deal with customers one at a time.

#### 2.1.6 Sales Performance

Zallocco et al., (2009) hypothesized sales performance as the evaluation of salespeople based on sales outcome (i.e. what they produce) as well as sales behaviors (i.e. what they do). Illustrations of the outcome of the sale include generations of sales units, revenue, market share, new accounts, profitability, while sales behaviors include selling skills (e.g. adaptive selling, teamwork, effective communication, etc.) and selling activities (e.g. making sales calls, managing time and territory, etc.) (Zallocco et al., 2009). According to Zallocco et al., (2009) and Cravens et al., (1993) as cited from (Anderson and Oliver, 1987), salesperson performance has been studied relative to both salesperson outcome and behavior performance. Irrespective of how performance is defined, sales managers play a significant role in safeguarding salesperson performance goals are met and a major problem that sales managers face in doing this is the inability to accurately measure performance (Zallocco et al., 2009).

#### 2.1.7 Determinants of Sales Performance

A large number of researchers have forwarded different factors that do have an influence on sales person's performance (Churchill et al., 19855; Baldauf and Cravens, 1999; Piercy et al., 1997; Baldauf et al., 2001; Babakus et al., 1996; Barker, 1999; Ahmad et al., 2010; Johalke, 2006; Sweet et al., 2007). Based on Sweet et al., (2007) work entitled "Developing a Benchmarking for company-wide Sales Capability" they have identified five drivers of sales performance:

**Leadership:** Including strategy, decision making, attitudes toward learning, improving, coaching.

**Motivation:** Including goal orientation and discipline, enthusiasm, planning, attitudes.

**Skills:** Including communication, negotiation, customer relationships, and presentation.

**Process:** including the company's sales systems, information, records, preparation, follow through and delivery.

**Marketplace:** including an understanding of the needs of customers, the market, their own products and those of their competitors.

According to Ahmad et al., (2010), these individual sales skills can be characterized into three dimensions: - Interpersonal, salesmanship and technical skills. The fourth dimension, which is derived from Ahearne and Schillewaort (2000), is marketing skills. The following paragraphs will discuss the synthesis of empirical studies made on each of the four dimensions of sales skills.

Several studies have identified a great number of independent variables that influence salesperson performance (e.g. Churchill et al, 1985; Baldauf & Cravens 1999; Piercey, Cravens, & Morgan, 1997; Babakus, Cravens Grant, Ingram, & Laforge, 1996; Baldauf & Cravens, 2002; Rentz et al., 2002; Johlke, 2006). These independent variables are such as aptitude, personal characteristics, skill levels, role perceptions, motivation, background and experience, current status and lifestyle, and demographic and physical characteristics. However, Churchill et al. (1985) found that:

- 1. In terms of the average size of their association with salesperson performance, the determinants were ordered as follows: role variables, sales skills, motivation, personal factors, aptitude, and organizational factors and
- 2. When ordered according to real variation (i.e., not attributable to sampling error), the determinants were ranked: personal factors, selling skills, role variables, aptitude, motivation, and organizational/environmental factors.

The Results of Churchill's et al. (1985) research indicated that sales skills were the second most important of the five variables, both in terms of average size association with performance and in terms of real variation. Nevertheless, Churchill et al. (1985) and Rentz et al. (2002) observed that fewer studies on individuals' characteristics related to sales skills dimensions of salespersons, had been conducted before Churchill's et al. (1985) meta-analysis studies. Nonetheless, since the remarkable meta-analysis studies, a considerable amount of research had focused on specific aspects or micro - skill stream of sales skill which focused on individual sales skills (Rentz et al., 2002). These micro- stream sales skills could be divided into three dimensions which are: interpersonal, salesmanship and technical skills. With respect to this, the present research attempts to continue from Churchill's et al. (1985) remarkable work to examine the effect of sales skill on salesperson performance. Specifically, the present study investigates the effect of

four sales skill dimension namely interpersonal skills, salesmanship skills, and technical skills were adopted from Ford et al. 1988; cited in Churchill et al., 2000), and the other dimension namely marketing skill was adopted from Ahearne and Schillewaert (2000). Hence, hereafter, the remainder of the literature discussion will just focus on these four sales skill dimensions.

Moreover, many researchers have emphasized the importance of salesperson's skills level on salesperson performance. (Churchill, Gilbert A., Neil M. Ford, Steven W. Hartley, and Orville C. Walker, Jr. (1985); Churchill et . al., 2000; Rentz, J. C., Shepherd, D., Armen, Tashchian, A., Dabholkar, P. A., Ladd, R. T. (2002);) Salespersons' selling skills have long been identified as a determinant of salesperson performance (Churchill et al., 1985; 2000 and Ford, Walker, Churchill, and Hartley 1988) who are credited with seminal work in this area found that besides aptitude, role perception, motivation, personality, and organizational factors, sales skills also affect salesperson performance. Moreover, in another study, Rentz et al. (2002) categorized selling skills into 24

Three dimensions namely interpersonal skills, salesmanship skills, and technical skills. These sales skills dimensions had been found to be useful predictors of salesperson performance. Furthermore, Ahearne and Schillewaert (2000) introduced marketing skills as other predictors to a salesperson performance.

#### 2.2. Empirical Review

#### 2.2.1. Sales Skills and Salesperson Performance

Many researchers have emphasized the importance of salespersons skill levels in relation to their performance (Churchill et al., 1985; Rentz et al., 2002 as cited in Ahmad et al., 2010). Churchill et al., (1985), Ford et al., (1988) and Ahmed et.al., (2010) also argued that beside aptitude, role perception, motivation, personality, and organizational factors, sales skills also affect a salespersons performance.

#### 2.2.2. Interpersonal Skills and Salesperson Performance

Interpersonal skills refer to mental and communication algorithms applied during social interaction and communication to reach certain effects and results. Several types of research on the area have found that interpersonal skills meaningfully predict salespersons performance

(Ahmad et al., 2010; Ford et al., 1988; Pillling and Eroglu, 1994;). As the finding from Lockemon and Hallag, (1982) indicate that interpersonal skills play a significant role in predicting salesperson success. Furthermore, Hill and Petty (1995) indicate that interpersonal skill can also predict employability.

According to Rentz et al. (2002), the dimensions of interpersonal skills are listening, empathy, optimism, and perceived observation skills. These dimensions had been operationalized and empirically tested independently to symbolize interpersonal skills measures in predicting salesperson performance. Thus, these dimensions are likely to collectively realize effective interpersonal skills and, in turn, salesperson performance as achieving high selling performance seemingly requires salespeople with strong interpersonal skills. In general, previous empirical studies proved a positive relationship between the four dimensions of interpersonal skills on salesperson performance.

#### 2.2.3. Salesmanship Skills and Salesperson Performance

The dimensions of salesmanship skills can be usually categorized into five subsections that are: adaptability, consultative selling, negotiation & questioning, and salesperson cues & communication style skills. According to Weitz, (1981) adaptive selling is defined as the salesperson's ability to change her sales behavior when interacting with customers. Goolsby et. al., (1992), and Schuster and Danes (1986) showed that negotiation skills possessed by a salesperson contributed to the salesperson's success. While, Morgan and Stoltman (1990) found that there was a positive relationship between adaptive personal selling and questioning, listening, and non- verbal behavior. They stated that a salesperson's perceptual abilities, including probing, asking questioning, listening, and detecting verbal and nonverbal clues, provide the basis for adaptive selling. Williams and Spiro (1985) found that successful salespersons would be the ones who could adapt their communication styles appropriately to interact with customers.

Similarly, Peterson et. al., (1995); Schul and Lamb (1982); and Gabbot and Hogg (2000) found that certain voice characteristics correlated highly with output sales performance. Consultative skills are another aspect of salesmanship feature which influence salesperson performance (De Cormier and Jobber, 1993; Goolsby et. al., 1992).

#### 2.2.4. Technical Skills and Salesperson Performance

Technical knowledge explains the behavior of salespeople in delivering information about the design and specification of products and the applications and functions of products and services. Many scholars justify that a positive relationship had empirically supported the use of technical knowledge results in higher salesperson performance (Baldauf et al., 2001; Grants and Cravens, 1999; Baldouf and Cravens, 1999; Katiskeck and Skermeas, 2003; Baldouf and Cravens, 2002). Likewise, Dariane et al., (2001) and Makinen (2004) found that salesperson's product knowledge is positively related to sales performance.

#### 2.2.5. Marketing Skills and Salesperson Performance

Based on Baldauf & Cravens, (2002); Futrell, (2006) as cited from (Behrman and Perreault, 1982), salespersons possess knowledge about the industry and trends in general such as customer's market and products; competitors' products, services, and sales policies; knowledge of competitors' product line and knowledge of customers' operations and these constitute the marketing skills of a salesperson. Researchers have also identified that client knowledge is critical for salesperson performance (Donath, 1993; Smith and Owens, 1995). Similarly, in a related study, Ahearne and Schillewaert (2000) proved that marketing skills do influence salesperson performance.

# Independent Variables Sales Skill dimensions TECHNICAL SKILL INTERPERSONAL SKILL MARKETING SKILL Sales Persons Performance SALESMANSHIP SKILL

Source: adopted from M. S. Basir, S. Z. Ahmad, P. J. Kitchen 2010

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

#### **CHAPTER THREE**

#### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the design of the study, sampling method, method of data collection, and method of data analysis for the proposed study.

#### 3.1. Research Design

There are two main approaches to a research problem - quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative methods are used to examine the relationship between variables with the primary goal being to analyze and represent that relationship mathematically through statistical analysis. This is the type of research approach most commonly used in scientific research problems. Qualitative methods are chosen when the goal of the research problem is to examine, understand and describe a phenomenon. These methods are a common choice in social science research problems and are often used to study ideas, beliefs, human behaviors and other research questions that do not involve studying the relationship between variables. Therefore, for this study, a quantitative research approach was used. The descriptive study design was used in this study which is commonly used to identify the relation between the four dimensions of sales skills.

#### 3.2. Population and Sampling Techniques

The study population was the supervisors of respective agrochemical importer and distributors found in Ethiopia based in Addis Ababa. The questioner directed to supervisors who would in turn assessed sales agronomy staffs. Currently, there are 66 licensed and registered agrochemical importing and distributing companies in the country. However, about 23 of them are not actively engaged in the business. Therefore, the survey has considered all the active companies, which were about forty-three in size. Most of the agrochemical importing and distributing companies have at least one salesperson and one manager in their organization.

Census method (Purposive sampling) was used to conclude the final sample size. The supervisor rating approach was used, hence, one immediate supervisor or the manager of the salesperson in each company was selected and questioned to rate the salesperson working under their portfolio. Therefore, the subject of the study was 43 supervisors/managers from 43 agrochemical importing and distributing companies.

#### 3.3. Tools and Procedures for Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was adopted and re-designed by the principal investigator. This tool was used to collect the primary data from the respondents. Structured questionnaires have been prepared and distributed to five supervisors as a pilot testing with the purpose of enhancing the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Then, comments and feedback from the supervisors have been collected and incorporated in the questionnaire and final versions of the questionnaire were produced and distributed for the supervisors to fill it them in.

#### 3.4. Data source and Type

The data sources used in this study were primary and secondary data sources. Primary data was collected from responses of sales super visors, by administering questioners. The questioners to be used are structured, as it is the case in quantitative research design and organized as five point likert scale from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. Secondary data was collect from different sources that includes mainly past studies, books, researches, published literatures and company annual report that could support the study from empirical & conceptual backgrounds.

#### 3.5. Method of Data Analysis

Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. After the desired data was gathered carefully, the quantitative data was processed and analyzed precisely using frequencies and percentage. Furthermore, to test all the hypothesis multivariate regression analysis was utilized and presented in tabular form. In addition, descriptive statistical tools like frequencies, percentages, mean and standard deviation were used to further indicate the relation. Furthermore, ordinary least square method was also used to test the hypothesis. The analysis was done with SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) software version 20.

#### 3.6. Validity test and Reliability test

#### 3.6.1 Validity test

Bryman & Bell (2007) defined validity as how much any measuring instrument measures what it is intended to measure. The important issue of measurement validity relates to whether measures of concepts really measure the concept or not. There are several ways of establishing validity but this study addressed content validity through the review of literature and adapting instruments used in previous studies.

#### 3.6.2 Reliability test

Reliability is the degree to which an assessment tool produces stable and consistent results, Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha method was used to test the reliability of the instrument, and therefore, the instrument was 67.2.30% reliable

Table 1. Case processing summary

		N	%
	Valid	43	100.0
Cases	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	43	100.0

Source: Survey, 2019.

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.672	25

Source: Survey, 2019

#### 3.7 Ethical Consideration

The respondents were assured that the information they provide is confidential and used exclusively for academic purpose. In addition, statements conform the prohibition incorporating any identity details or personal references in the questioner. This helps the researcher to collect bias-free response and allow respondents a room to express their idea with full of freedom. Much effort was made to keep the response confidential and would not be used for any personal interest. Generally, the whole process of the research was controlled to be within acceptable professional ethics.

#### **CHAPTER FOUR**

#### **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### 4.1. Demography of Respondents

This is the first section of the fourth chapter; here the demographic characteristics of respondents would be discussed.

Table 3. Demographic characteristics of respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	37	86.0	86.0	86.0
	Female	6	14.0	14.0	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	
Age	18-35	20	46.5	46.5	46.5
	36-45	19	44.2	44.2	90.7
	46-50	4	9.3	9.3	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	
Education	Diploma	4	9.3	9.3	9.3
	Degree	32	74.4	74.4	83.7
	Masters	7	16.3	16.3	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	
Experience	10 years and above	18	41.9	41.9	41.9
	5-10 years	19	44.2	44.2	86.0
	5 years or less	6	14.0	14.0	100.0
	Total	43	100.0	100.0	

Source: Survey, 2019

The first variable was the sex of respondents; accordingly, the majorities (86%) of the respondents were male and the rest 14 percent are females. In agrochemical, industry females are not encouraged to spend more time with agrochemicals due to the high health risk than male; some pesticides may interfere with the female hormonal function, which may lead to negative effects on the reproductive system through disruption of hormonal balance necessarily for proper functioning (Reini W Bretveld et al., 2006). In addition, being a salesperson for the agriculture industry might have a lot of field work, that are difficult to women's.

In term of the age of respondents, 46.5 percent of the respondents belonged to in the age group of 18 to 35 years of age; 44.2 percent of the respondents fell in the age group of 36 to 45 years of

age and the rest 9.3 percent of the respondents are in the age range of 46 to 50. The age proportion indicated that the majority of the sales persons are young but senior.

With related to the academic qualifications of respondents, 9.3 percent of the respondents were diploma holders, 16.3 percent of the respondents were master's degree holders and the rest majority of the sales persons were degree holders; which shows the company hires academically equipped individuals.

Furthermore, 41.9 percent of the respondents had more than 10 years of working experience in the sector, 44.2 percent of the respondents had 5 to 10 years of working experience and the rest 14 percent of the respondents had less than five years. The working experience suggests that in the agrochemical sector mostly more experienced and senior employees are needed in the market. This is may be the sector is much sensitive entertain mistakes.

#### 4.2. Personal Selling Skills and Sales Performance

#### **4.2.1 Descriptive statistics**

#### 4.2.1.1 Technical skill

Table 4. Technical skills of salespersons

Technical skill	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	St.
							Devi
Salespeople under my supervision have	11.6	67.4	9.3	7	4.7	2.26	0.9282
excellent knowledge about product							

development							
Salespeople under my supervision have	7	9.3	11.6	32.6	39.5	3.88	1.2384
excellent knowledge of product							
performance.							
Salespeople under my supervision have	7	25.6	11.6	27.9	27.9	3.44	1.3327
excellent knowledge of the delivery							
process.							
Salespeople under my supervision have	7	18.6	11.6	27.9	34.9	3.65	1.3252
excellent knowledge of product							
features.							
Total	8.15	30.225	11.025	23.85	26.75	3.3075	1.2061

Source: Survey, 2019.

Technical under this context means that to what extent the salesmen are professionally equipped and know about their professional surrounding in terms of product nature, product performance and etc. Accordingly, above 78 percent of the respondent concluded that salespeople who work supervision didn't have excellent knowledge about product development, under their conversely, 11.7 percent of the supervisor respondents replied that salespeople who work under their supervision have excellent knowledge about product development; the rest 9.3 percent of the respondents have no idea about this thing. 16.3 percent of the sales supervisor also mentioned that salespeople under their supervision did not have excellent knowledge of product performance. Unlike these, a very majority of the respondents (72.1%) replied that salespersons who work under their supervision have excellent knowledge of product performance. In this regard, 111.6 percent of the respondents neither agree nor disagree. Apart from these, more than 55 percent of the supervisor respondents confirmed that salespeople under their supervision have excellent knowledge of the delivery process and product features; on the other hand, around 26 percent of the respondents replied that salespersons who are under their supervision didn't have much knowledge on product delivery and product feature. Apparently, taking the technical skill as a whole, 8.15 percent of the respondent strongly agrees about the technical skill, 30.22 agreed about the technical skill, 11.02 neither agree nor disagree and the rest 23.85 and 26.75 percent of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed about the technical skill of salespersons.

Furthermore, the mean score of technical skill was 3.3 that imply more or less under the observation of the supervisor's sales person had technical skill. Technical skills are the critical factor that helps sales persons to perform well, and hence, concerning the technical skill overall sales persons are had a technical skills meaning that sales persons had proportional knowledge about product development, product performance, product feature and delivery process

### 4.2.1.2 Marketing Skills

Table 5. Marketing Skills of Salespersons

Marketing skills	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	St.
							Dev
Sales people under my supervision have a	20.9	25.6	11.6	16.3	25.6	3.00	1.5275
real time information							
Salespeople under my supervision have a	14	25.6	20.9	16.3	23.3	3.09	1.3941
lot of information on industry trends							
Salespeople under my supervision are well	30.2	25.6	16.3	16.3	11.6	2.53	1.3861
informed about important events in our							
industry							
Total	21.7	25.6	16.26	16.3	20.16	2.873	1.4359

Source: Survey, 2019.

One of the basic skills any salesperson expected to have is the marketing skills; in line with this, the researcher collects some related data; accordingly, 41.9 percent of the respondents replied that the salespeople under their supervision have real-time information; while more than 45 percent of the respondents confirmed that the salespeople under their supervision didn't have real-time information; the rest 11.6 percent of the respondents neither agree nor disagree. Apparently, 39.6 percent of the supervisor respondents replied that the salespeople who work under their supervision have a lot of information on industry trends, conversely, 39.6 percent of the respondents confirmed that salespeople under their supervision didn't have a lot of information on industry trends; concerning industry trend information, 20.9 percent of the respondents neither agree nor disagree. In addition to these, 27.9 percent of the supervisors

confirmed that salespeople who work under their supervision are well informed about important events in the industry; in reverse to these, more than 55 percent of the respondents said that salespeople under their supervision are not well informed about important events in the industry. Considering the overall marketing skill of the salespersons, 21.7 percent of the supervisors strongly disagree, 25.6 percent of the supervisors disagree, 16.26 percent of the supervisors neither disagree nor agree, 16.3 percent of the supervisors agree and 20.16 percent of the supervisors strongly agree. Apparently, the mean of marketing skill was 2.87 which lies between disagree and neutral; however below 2.8 considered as disagree level. Accordingly, through looking the mean result one can conclude that the marketing skills of the sales persons are low. Marketing skill mainly incorporate information about the market situations; information about updated information, industry trend, and related important information; with regard to this sales of the agrochemical companies have a little bit reluctance on updating themselves about the current marketing situations and overall the industry trends; which indirectly had an implication on the sales of the company.

### 4.2.1.3 Interpersonal Skills

Table 6. Interpersonal skill of salespersons

Interpersonal skills	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	St.
							Dev
Salespeople under my supervision	16.3	9.3	14	37.2	23.3	3.42	1.3841
have excellent ability to express							
themselves							
Salespeople under my supervision	11.6	11.6	16.3	41.9	18.6	3.44	1.2592
have excellent ability in general							
speaking							
Salespeople under my supervision	14	23.3	16.3	30.2	16.3	3.12	1.3311
have excellent awareness and							
understanding of the customer							

Salespeople under my supervision	11.6	14	9.3	39.5	25.6	3.53	1.3336
are excellent in controlling and							
regulating emotion							
Salespeople under my supervision	32.6	14	9.3	18.6	25.6	2.91	1.6448
have excellent ability to influence							
Total	14.35	12.033	10.86	27.9	18.23	3.284	1.3905

Source: Survey, 2019.

The interpersonal skill concerns the way how salespersons communicate with customers; in line with this, 60.5 percent of the sample supervisor confirmed that salespeople under their supervision have excellent ability to express themselves; although, 25.6 percent of the didn't agree on this regard. The rest 14 percent of the respondents neither agree nor disagree. More than 70 percent of the supervisors confirmed that salespeople under their supervision have excellent ability in general speaking; on the other hand, 23.2 percent of the respondents said that salespeople under their supervision didn't have excellent ability in general speaking; the rest 16.3 percent neither agree nor disagree. 46.5 percent of the supervisors confirmed that salespeople who work under their supervision have excellent awareness and understanding of the customer; on the other hand, 37.3 percent of the respondents confirmed that salespeople who work under their supervision didn't have excellent awareness and understanding of the customer. Concerning having awareness and understanding of customers 16.3 percent of the respondent neither agree nor disagree. Above 66 percent of the respondents confirmed that salespeople who work under their supervision are excellent in controlling and regulating emotion, while 25.6 percent of the respondents reject this statement. The rest 9.3 percent of the respondents neither agree nor disagree on these issues. Apart from these, salespersons had an excellent ability to influence customers; this was confirmed by 44.2 percent of the supervisors. On the other hand, 48.6 percent of the supervisor respondents replied that the salespeople who worked under their supervision didn't have excellent ability to influence; the rest 9.3 percent of the respondents neither agree nor disagree with regard to influencing customers. As a summary, concerning the interpersonal skills of salespersons, 14.5 percent of the supervisors were strongly disagreed, 12.03 percent of the supervisors disagreed, 10.86 percent of the supervisors neither agreed nor disagree and the rest 27.9 and 18.23 percent of the respondents agreed and strongly agree respectively. Furthermore, the interpersonal skill had a mean of 3.284, which lies between

neutral and agree but considered as agree; and hence, through looking the mean result it is possible to conclude that salespersons had good interpersonal skills.

### 4.2.1.4 Salesmanship Skill

Table 7. Salesmanship skills of Salespersons

Salesmanship skills	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	St.
							Dev
Salespeople under my	16.3	14	9.3	37.2	23.3	3.37	1.4146
supervision have excellent ability							
to influence the customer to buy							
Salespeople under my	18.6	11.6	23.3	23.3	23.3	3.21	1.4235
supervision have excellent ability							
in presenting offers to customers							
Salespeople under my	7	23.3	7	39.5	23.3	3.49	1.2793
supervision have excellent ability							
to service customers							
Total	13.96667	16.3	13.2	33.33333	23.3	3.35	1.3724

Source: Survey, 2019.

The salesmanship skill talks about to what extent salespersons use their sales skill to influence customers; accordingly, 60.5 percent of the supervisors said that salespersons who work under their supervision have excellent ability to influence the customer to buy; on the other hand, around 30.3 percent of the respondents confirmed that those salespersons who worked under their supervision didn't have excellent ability to influence the customer to buy. The rest 9.3 percent of the respondents neither agree nor disagree with regard to influencing customers. Apart from these, more than 46 percent of the respondents replied that salesperson's work under their supervision have excellent ability in presenting offers to customers, whereas, 30.2 percent of them said not. The rest 23.3 percent of the respondents neither agree nor disagree concerning the ability to present offers for customers. In addition to these, 62.8 percent of the respondents

confirmed that salespeople who worked under their supervision have excellent ability to serve customers; on the other hand, around 30 percent of the respondents said that salespersons didn't have excellent ability in serving customers. The grand analysis of salesmanship skill reflects that with regard to salesmanship skills of salespersons 13.96 percent of the respondents strongly disagree, 16.3 percent of the respondent agree, 13.2 percent of the respondents neither agree nor disagree, the rest 33.33 and 23.3 percent of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree respectively. The same way, the mean of salesmanship is 3.35 which put between neutral and agree; however, the result approaches to agree on the level. From this analysis possibly to conclude that the salesmanship skill of the sales persons is good.

### **4.2.1.5** Sales Performance

Table 8. Sales person's performance of sales persons

Sales Person Performance		D	N	A	SA	Mean	St.
							Devi
Salespeople under my supervision are	27.9	11.6	7	32.6	20.9	3.07	1.5644
excellent in generating a high level of sales							
Salespeople under my supervision are very	14	11.6	39.5	14	20.9	3.16	1.2897
effective in exceeding sales targets							

Total	20.95	11.6	23.25	23.3	20.9	3.115	1.4270

Source: Survey, 2019.

This part measures the general sales performance of respondents which implies do the sales of salespersons are maximum or minimum. Accordingly, 53.5 percent of the supervisor respondents confirmed that salespeople who work under their supervision are excellent in generating a high level of sales, on the other hand, 39.5 percent of the supervisors said that the salespeople under their supervision were not excellent in generating a high level of sales. The rest 7 percent of the supervisors neither agree nor disagree with regard to the high level of sales. Apart from these, 34.9 percent of the supervisor respondents replied that salespeople who worked under their supervision are very effective in exceeding sales targets, while 25.6 percent of them said not. With regard to exceeding sales target majority (39.5) percent of the respondents, neither agree nor disagree. Salespersons were measured using two items and the summary indicates that concerning the sales persons performance 20.95 percent of the supervisors were strongly disagree, 11.6 percent of the supervisors disagree, 23.25 percent of the supervisors neither agree nor disagree and the rest 23.3 and 20.9 percent of the supervisors agree and strongly agree respectively. Apparently, salesperson performance had a mean of 3.11 which almost led on a neutral level which interpreted as supervisors couldn't speak confidently about the sales performance of salespersons either to the right or left direction.

### **4.2.1.6** Correlation Analysis

Table 9. Correlations Analysis

#### **Correlations**

		Sales Performance	Technical Skill	Marketing Skill	Interpersonal Skill	Salesmanship Skill
Sales Performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.780**	.535**	.449**	.710**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.002	.000
	N	43	43	43	43	43
Tk-:1 Cl-:11	Pearson Correlation	.780**	1	.282	.286	.536**
Technical Skill	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.067	.063	.000
	N	43	43	43	43	43
	Pearson Correlation	.535**	.282	1	.212	.604**
Marketing Skill	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.067		.172	.000
	N	43	43	43	43	43
Interpersonal	Pearson Correlation	.449**	.286	.212	1	.348*
Skill	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	.063	.172		.022
	N	43	43	43	43	43
Salesmanship Skill	Pearson Correlation	.710**	.536**	.604**	.348*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.022	
	N	43	43	43	43	43

<sup>\*\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Survey, 2019.

The correlation analysis is done to see whether there is an association between sales performance and the identified variables that were expected to have an influence such as technical skill, marketing skill, interpersonal skill and salesmanship skill. Accordingly, the correlation analysis shown below shows that technical skill and salesmanship against sales performance had a strong and positive association with one percent level of significance. Furthermore, marketing skill and interpersonal skill against salesperson performance had also shows a positive, moderate and significant association at one percent significance level.

<sup>\*.</sup> Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

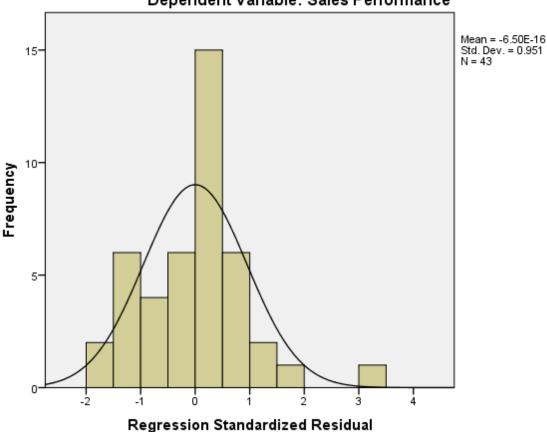
### 4.2.2 Inferential Statistics: Regression Analysis, OLS Estimation

### 4.2.2.1 Ordinary Least Square assumption test

### 4.2.2.1.1 Normality assumption

The assumptions of normality were conducted in order to see whether the residuals are normally distributed. Accordingly, the histogram test was performed and as shown below in the histogram chart the residuals are normally distributed.

# Histogram Dependent Variable: Sales Performance



Source: Survey, 2019.

Figure 2 Normality test

### 4.2.2.1.2 Assumptions of homoscedasticity/heteroskedasticity

Table 10. Test of heteroscedasticity

Breusch-Pagan / Cook-Weisberg test for heteroskedasticity

Ho: Constant variance

Variables: fitted values of SALSPERFO

chi2(1) = 2.95

Prob > chi2 = 0.0460

Source: Survey, 2019.

This assumption of heteroskedasticity states that there should be a constant variance between each observations error term. Therefore, Breusch-Pagan test was the most common test which is used to test the problem of heteroskedasticity; accordingly, as we have seen in the table above the p-values is below five percent level of significance which implies there is a problem of heteroskedasticity. Therefore, the researcher should have to look an alternative solution; among the solutions used Weighted Least Squares Analysis to estimate

### 4.2.2.2 Estimation Result and Interpretation

As shown in the previous subtopic all of the assumptions were fulfilled except Heteroscedasticity, therefore in order to avoid the problem the regression was estimated using the weighted least squares method. As shown in the Model summary and ANOVA table below the coefficient of determination ( $\mathbb{R}^2$ ) for the model is 0.779 ( $\mathbb{F}$ = 41.245, p < 0.001) showing that the model explained 77.9% of the variation in the level of sales performance and the overall model is statistically significant. Apart from this, the data is free from the multicollinearity problem.

Table 11. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate
1	.883 <sup>a</sup>	.779	.756	1.088

Source: Survey, 2019.

a. Predictors: (Constant), Salesmanship Skill, Marketing Skill, Technical Skill,

Interpersonal Skill

b. Dependent Variable: Sales Performance

Table 12. ANOVA

Mo	odel	Sum of	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
		Squares				
	Regression	158.653	4	39.663	33.477	.000 <sup>b</sup>
1	Residual	45.022	38	1.185		
	Total	203.674	42			

Source: Survey, 2019.

a. Dependent Variable: Sales Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Salesmanship Skill, Marketing Skill, Technical Skill,

Interpersonal Skill

Table 13. Coefficients and Multicollinearity test

		andardized efficients			t	Sig.	Collinear Statistic	,
	В	Std. Error	Beta	Std. Error			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-8.128	1.2690			4.809	.000		
TECHNICAL SKILL	.544	.090	.549	.085	6.020	.000	.699	1.431
MARKETING SKILL	.161	.076	.203	.079	2.118	.041	.633	1.580
INTERPERSONAL KILL	.139	.068	.168	.097	2.048	.048	.865	1.156
SALESMANSHIP SKILL	.173	.082	.234	.067	2.110	.041	.471	2.121

Source: Survey, 2019.

As shown in the table above at the end of the presentation; the results of the econometric model estimation revealed that technical skill, marketing skill, salesmanship and interpersonal skill were found to contribute significantly and positively to sales person's sales performance. The effects of each independent variable are discussed below.

Accordingly, the first variable that was expected to have a relationship with sales performance was the technical skill of salespersons. The variable technical skill had a positive and significant effect (p<0.05) on the sales performance of salespersons. The positive coefficient of this variable suggested that as the technical skill of salespersons increases by one percent the sales performance of salespersons also increases by 0.544 percent. This implies if any improvement made on technical skills of the sales persons their sales performance also increases. The other important variable was the marketing skills of the salespersons; this variable marketing skill of salespersons shows positive and significant (p<0.05) effect on their sales performance. The positive coefficients of this particular variable suggested that when the marketing skill of salespersons increased by one percent their sales performance also increases by 0.161 percent. By any means either informal training or physical exposure and experience if the marketing skill increases it had a direct implication on their sales performance whereby on the company's sales.

The same as the above to variables interpersonal skill of the sales persons had a positive and significant effect on the sales performance of salespersons. As the interpersonal skill of the salesperson increases by one percent, their sales performance also increases by 0.139 percent. Furthermore, the variable salesmanship had also a positive and significant effect on sales performance, as the salesmanship increases by one unit the sales performance of the sales person increases by 0.173 percent.

### 4.3. Summary of Hypothesis

HAYPOTHESIS	DECISION
H1: Technical skill has an impact on salespersons' performance.	Accepted
H2: Marketing skill has an impact on salespersons' performance.	Accepted
H3: Interpersonal skill has an impact on salespersons' performance.	Accepted
H4: Salesmanship skill has an impact on salespersons' performance.	Accepted

Source: Survey, 2019.

### **CHAPTER FIVE**

### SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### **5.1 Summary of Major Findings**

Based on the analysis of the study the following are the major findings of the study:

- In the agrochemical industry sales persons possess four different type of skills, technical, marketing, interpersonal and salesmanship skill. The findings of the descriptive statistics revealed that salespersons had good salesmanship, technical and interpersonal skill, moderate marketing skills.
- The correlation analysis shows that technical skill and salesmanship against sales
  performance had a strong and positive association with one percent level of significance.
  Furthermore, marketing skill and interpersonal skill against salesperson performance had
  also shows a positive, moderate and significant association at one percent significance
  level.
- Apart from the above, the regression analysis further revealed that the variable technical skill, marketing skill, salesmanship and interpersonal skill had a significant and positive effect on the sales performance of salesperson.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

This study was performed to examine the relationship between sales skills and sales person's performance. Specifically, this research was conducted to identify the extent to which salespersons are equipped with sales skills and to determine the relationship between the sales skill dimensions and salesperson performance of agrochemical importing and distributing companies. In order to answer the stated objectives descriptive research design was employed; apparently, for this research census method was used to identify the target respondents where data were collected from all of the 43 supervisors using well-tested instrument; both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The findings of the descriptive statistics revealed that salespersons had good salesmanship, technical and interpersonal skill, moderate marketing skills. The correlation analysis further revealed that sales person's sales performance

had a positive and strong association with technical and salesmanship. Furthermore, sales performance had also a positive and moderate association with marketing and interpersonal skills. Apart from these, the regression analysis further revealed that the variable technical skill, marketing skill, salesmanship and interpersonal skill had a significant and positive effect on the sales performance of salesperson.

### 5.3 Recommendation

Bases on the conclusions drawn the researcher provides following recommendations.

- ➤ Since the technical skill, has a significant effect on sales performance of salespersons. it is recommended to improve technical skill about product development, performance, delivery, features, values of product and specifications by giving trainings and workshops for the existing employees or by hiring sales person who have a good technical knowledge and train them the technical detail of the product.
- ➤ Marketing skill has significant positive effect on sales performance of salesperson. It is recommended to improve this skill by improving real time information, information on industry trends and information on important events from media and internet.
- ➤ Since salesmanship skill has significant positive effect on sales performance of salesperson. As a result, it is recommended to improve this skill by improving adaptability, consultative selling, negotiation & questioning, and salesperson cues & communication style skills.
- Likewise, Interpersonal, skill has also significant positive effect on sales performance of salesperson. Therefore, it is recommended to improve this skill by improving both verbal and non-verbal communication through training and workshop.

### 5.4 Research Limitation and Future Research

- ➤ It will be better if researchers in the area will employ both supervisory and self-reported method of data collection and cross comparisons are made between the two groups.
- Furthermore it will be better if additional variables other than sales skills like; Personality, Role perception, Environmental factors and Aptitude; included in the model. Better on those aspects that impact customers' attitudes and their purchase. Furthermore, evaluation from customers may add more meaningful and convincing results.

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**APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE** 

A Questionnaire On

The Impact of Sales Skills on Personal Selling Performance:

The Case of pesticide importers and Distributors (B2B) sales Agronomists,

St. MARY'S UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

(Master's Program)

A Questionnaire to be filled by Enterprise (Business to Business) supervisor of sales

agronomists

Dear respondents,

This questionnaire is prepared to conduct a research entitled with "The Impact of Sales Skills on

Personal Selling Performance: The Case of Pesticide importing Enterprise (B2B) Sales Personnel",

which is prepared in partial fulfillment of Master's Degree in Marketing Management. The overall

purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between sales skills and sales person's performance.

All information provided through this is used only for academic purpose and to be considered with top

confidentiality. I would like to thank you in advance for your participation, given your busy schedule.

Dawit Bancha

Mob. 0931259522

Email:banchadawit@gmail.com

### **General Instructions**

It is not necessary to write your name on this questionnaire.

For likert scale type statements indicate your answers with a check  $mark(\sqrt{\ })$  in the appropriate box.

## Part I: Demographic Data of the sales person (To be enumerated by the student Researcher)

1. Sex	Male		Female
2. Age	18-35 years old		36-45 years old
	46-60 years old and	above	
3. Education	Diploma		
	Bachelor degree		Master's degree and above
4. Experience	Less than 5 years		5-10 years
	Above 10 years		

### **Part II: Scale Questions**

Please give score from 0 to 5 ratting the sales skills, organizational commitment and performance of those sales persons under your supervision parallel to each statement under the score column as follows: 1= strongly disagree 2= Disagree 3= neither agree nor disagree 4= Agree 5= strongly agree

5. Sales people under my supervision have excellent ability to influence			
Salesmanship skills			
1. Sales people under my supervision have excellent ability to influence the			
customer to buy			
2. Sales people under my supervision have excellent ability in presenting offers to			
customers			
3. Sales people under my supervision have excellent ability to service customers			
Sales person Performance			
1. Sales people under my supervision are excellent in generating high level of			
sales			
2. Sales people under my supervision are very effective in exceeding sales targets			