

# THE IMPACT OF GOAL ORIENTATION ON SALES PERFORMANCE: MODERATING ROLE OF SYMBOLIC LEADERSHIP

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**ABSTRACT:** *This study examines the relationship between goal orientation and sales performance majorly the moderating role of symbolic leadership. The research was conducted on 250 sales employees working in FMCGS industry of Pakistan. Hierarchical regression analyses were used for the analysis of the hypothesis. The result shows the significant relationship between goal orientation and sales performance. Moderation regression revealed that symbolic leadership significantly affects the relationship of goal orientation and sales performance. Goal orientation exhibits the highest sales performance when symbolic leadership showed by employees. The discussion and conclusion with future direction are also given in the paper.*

**KEYWORDS:** Goal orientation, Symbolic leadership, Sales Performance.

## INTRODUCTION:

In sales Organization, Salesperson learns about a new product, technologies and understanding conflicting customer needs to achieve sales target [1,11]. As the demands of customers changes with the launching of new products the complexity for salespersons increases. The value of Goal Orientation in sellers' sales performance was recognized by the literature [30,26,12]. Whereas, sales performance and goal orientation effect in perspective of leadership behavior is not well discussed [16,14] other leadership styles like transformational in studied as a moderator variable between goal orientation and sales performance [11] but the role of new emerging symbolic leadership is still ignored in researches. The role of leadership is an essential tool for guiding people, leaders must understand their follower's symbolic interactions and give importance to the way their followers interpret. Therefore, if the leaders and its followers do the symbolic interactions then its value is even greater [18].

According to [22] and their selling framework, sales peoples made sales presentation personalized for each customer based on the information they gather. Additional, salespeople make rapid strategy adjustment based on the customer reactions they observe on the given sales strategy. Significantly, researchers, the major focus is sales person's capabilities and skills moderate the ability to adapt flexible selling strategy during a sales interaction [21]. From the sales manager point of view, one of the main organizational contributions that form an effective sales force is the best sellers; therefore, several researchers are attracted to gain attention on sales leadership [15] and the discipline has been strengthened by mining feasible and useful ideas. Overall, the top-down perspective makes the sales leadership approach, and in a recent meta-analysis by [32], leadership behavior validates significant influence on the seller's performance.

In Symbolic interaction based on four elements, we Modify our behavior in face to face interactions. First individual perception of the interaction, second how we understand it, third the meaning that is embedded in the interaction, and fourth how we think other is making sense of that same event [27]. The social development that prompts comparability fascination gives or denies power, impact, and rewards in the work environment. Though, the studies confirm that there are

still some major and important gaps in goal orientation. For instance, there are evidence demonstrating that the goal orientations of sales representatives are impacted by the supervisory input, with a few analysts concentrating on the supervisory criticism styles and their belongings [e.g., 26, 11]. [23] uncovers that positive and negative feedback support as signs for endorsement or required change, consequently encouraging performance and GO. Researchers have many propositions like using a different kind of supervisory style of GO to check the sales performance. The objective of this research is to examine the moderating effect of symbolic leadership style between goal orientation and sales performance

## LITERATURE REVIEW:

### Goal Orientation and Sales Performance:

Goal orientation is defined in achievement-related context as a single preference or goals detained in performance [23]. Most of the researchers highlighted the difference between performance goal and learning goals. The researchers on goal orientation derived from motivational theories goal accomplishment be able to appraise by criteria of internal and external [33]. Learning goals are from internal standards and context of performance goals are adopted by external standards. Learning-oriented employees have the desire to improve them, involve themselves in challenging tasks and compare their performance with previous performances [17,28]. On the other hand, the challenging task is avoiding by the people with a performance orientation [7]. Learning-oriented salespeople are the one who seeks challenges, and have their abilities flexible, and have believed that only success can be achieved through effort, competencies and skill development [16,25]. LO people have a strong association between advancement and learning [5]. PO people view their ability as steady and an ongoing aptitude that is innate rather than changeable [2,6].

Sales representatives can have indistinguishable inspiration forces in spite of their unique goal orientations, behaviors, and performance levels. Learning-oriented people see their skills as flexible [5,24]. This is the reason why the performance of the task is striving to improve in learning-oriented people, whereas the people see their ability as a fixed entity in performance-orientation [5] and, unlike

learning-oriented people, they show performance by demonstration of the level of their skills [17] Marketers with a dominant PO compare themselves with their others i.e. their colleagues and are motivated to achieve sales goals, they often look for prizes and awards of others [16]. For obtaining high performances, the role of supervisor and Colleagues is to encourage these sellers to work hard and recognize their performance [25].

H1: Salespeople's goal orientations have positive effects on sales performance.

### **Symbolic Leadership as Moderator:**

Symbolic leadership theory, it collects a useful structure that traps the association on several levels. Most Commonly, Symbolic leadership is defined as "Leader which is taken as an idol and based on the category of meaning." Meaning becomes tangible and therefore can be experienced in the form of symbols [19,35]. Symbolic leadership is a total term, which joins thoughts driven by the likelihood that reality just breezes up undeniable and can be made due through symbols. In the occasion that man is seen as a "symbolic animal", the experience of this present reality or wonders of bona fide reliably occurs inside a structure that underlines its symbolic meaning [8]. Leadership in this origination relies upon symbols, as it must be seen, moreover utilizes symbols to make visions, objectives, ideas or understandable purposes [35]. In this sense, the company's symbols usually have two techniques: firstly, to achieve an operational goal the symbols act as information devices. and, secondly, symbols get an expressive part that exploits the needs and emotional values of the peoples use special symbols shows that symbolic leadership provides meaning that helps people learn and, therefore, increases the organization's performance [9]. The focus on processes of sales representatives during job execution is a focus in the behavior-based control system, with the high level of management support and leadership intervention is essential for performance control [20]

The relationship between variables is defined by researchers using self-regulation theory [e.g.,31,23]. In the sales context, the self-regulation strategies help to develop knowledge and sales skills in case of vendors oriented to learning objective [36], increasing their performance. According to the research of [25] and their selling framework, Sales peoples made sales presentation personalized for each customer based on the information they gather. Additional, salespeople make rapid

strategy adjustment based on the customer reactions they observe on the given sales strategy. Significantly, researchers, the major focus is sales person's capabilities and skills moderate the ability to adapt flexible selling strategy during a sales interaction [29,25]. From the sales manager point of view, one of the main organizational contributions that form an effective sales force is the best sellers; therefore, several researchers are attracted to gain attention on sales leadership [15] and the discipline has been strengthened by mining feasible and useful ideas. Overall, the top-down perspective makes the sales leadership approach, and in a recent meta-analysis by [32]. For the performance control of sale representatives during job execution in a behavior-based control system, with a high level of management support and leadership intervention is essential for performance control [20]. In this study, it is hypothesized that

H2: Symbolic leadership will moderate the positive relationship between salespeople's goal orientations.

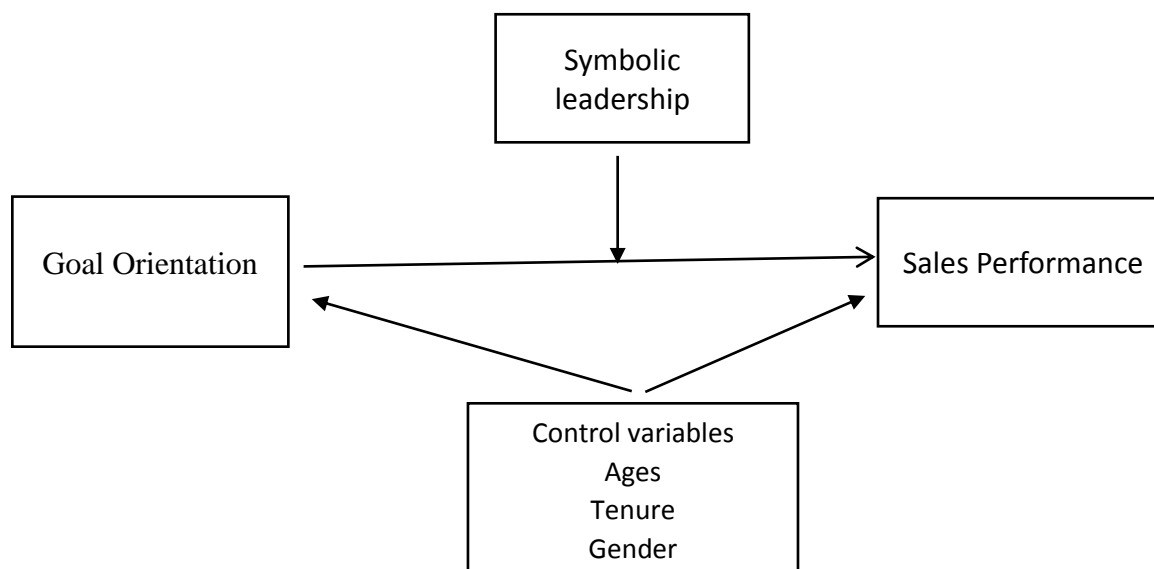
## **METHODOLOGY:**

### **Sample and Procedures:**

The research approach is quantitative with the cross-sectional approach is used in this research. The data is collected from the 250 salespeople of FMCG sector of Islamabad. The data is collected through structured questionnaires. Goal orientation is measured by a scale that is developed [2] which consist of 11 items, performance goal orientation was measured by 5 items and learning orientation was measured by 6 items. Items used 7 points Linkert scale 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree. Sales performance [4] 5 point Linkert scale is used to measure sales performance and symbolic leadership is measured through [10] 5 point Linkert scale is used. Random sampling technique is used to collect data. Hierarchical regression is used to test the hypothesis. Consistent with the previous research age, gender and tenure is controlled [e.g.13]

### **Data Analysis:**

Table 1 shows the relationship between Goal orientation and sales performance which is  $r = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.01$  shows the positive relationship between the predictor and dependent variable. The values of goal orientation and symbolic leadership is  $r = 0.32$ ,  $p < 0.01$  shows the significant relationship between variables.

**Research Model:****Fig 01: Theoretical Framework****Table 1 Means, Standard Deviation (SD), and Correlation Coefficient among Variable.**

	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Gender	-	-	-					
2	Age	33.89	7.61	0.05	1				
3	Tenure	1.39	0.76	0.17*	0.18*	1			
4	GO	3.94	0.55	0.09	0.17*	0.16*	1		
5	SP	3.84	0.79	0.11	0.08	0.18*	0.35**	1	
6	SBL	4.21	0.63	0.21*	0.10	0.09	0.32**	0.42**	1

**Notes:** \*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

GO= Goal orientation, SP= Sales Performance, SBL= Symbolic Leadership

**Hypothesis Analysis:****Table 2: Summary of Hierarchical Regressions for Sales Performance as a Function of Goal Orientation**

Variables	B	T	R <sup>2</sup>	ΔR <sup>2</sup>	F	P
Step 1						
Age	0.191	2.19				0.045
Tenure	0.170	2.07				0.030
Gender	0.094	0.66				0.513
			0.160	0.160	2.339	0.041
Step 2						
GO	0.214	2.261	0.262	0.221	6.232	0.002

It is hypothesizing that goal orientation have a positive effect on sales performance. Table 2 shows that the  $\beta$  value is 0.214 and the P-value is 0.002 this show that both variables

significantly relates to each other. The goal orientation shows 26 % **variance** which shows significant effect F value is 0.232, P 0.002. these values support that H<sub>1</sub> is accepted.

## Moderation Analysis:

**Table 3. Summary of Hierarchical Regressions: Moderating Effect of Symbolic Leadership**

Variables	$\beta$	T	R <sup>2</sup>	$\Delta R^2$	F	P
Step 1						
Age	0.0113	1.12				
Tenure	0.106	0.95				
Gender	0.082	0.59				
			0.085	0.09	1.581	0.182
Step 2						
GO	0.214	2.261	0.262	0.221	6.232	0.002
SBL	0.266	2.346	0.212	0.091	3.371	0.003
Step 3						
GO x SBL	0.409	2.276	0.231	0.123	7.681	0.005

Note: GO= Goal orientation, SBL= Symbolic Leadership

Table 3 shows the moderation effect of a variable. By following [3], control variables are entered first into the model and then GO and SBL entered in the model to forecast Sales performance and in last the interaction relations among GO and SBL was entered. Table 3 shows the interaction effect or moderating effect of symbolic leadership between Goal orientation and sales performance. Value of  $\beta=0.21$  with the P-value 0.002;  $\beta = 0.26$  with the P-value 0.003 Goal orientation and symbolic leadership are the significant predictor of sales performance. When moderation is tested GO x SBL the result shows the significant relationship between interaction terms on sales performance with the value of  $\Delta R^2$  0.123 which shows 12% variation. Hence the  $H_2$  is also accepted that symbolic leadership moderates the relationship between goal orientation and sales performance.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION:

The objective of the study is satisfied that is related to the direct effect, moderation role of variable and the measurement model valuation. However, the study result reveals that the moderators' symbolic leadership moderate the relationship between goal orientation and sales performance. Individuals who systematically analyze their goal orientation and looks for new opportunities and responding to those will perform better. Hence, these results of this study should encourage individuals to invest resources in being innovative opportunistic. Additionally, the result also reveals that the support of moderator i.e. symbolic leadership between goal orientation is significant. It implies that the symbolic leadership is essential for the individuals of the organization only are enough, and the individuals are emotionally attached to the organization. In the sales industry, the concept of symbolic is rare therefore, this research shows that this style of leadership might give positive impact in enhancing the relation of goal orientation and sales performance.

For successful implementation of organization sales strategy, the top executive support is requiring to encourage the adaption of goal orientation in individuals and provide visionary leadership which increases the need of innovation across in the organization. Simultaneously with this argument, there is a strong influence of leadership support on the implementation of the innovation system in the organizations. Therefore, a researcher claims that leadership

support motivates to adopt goal orientation by giving strength to Individuals.

Moreover, the direct relationship between goal orientation and sales performance has significantly related to each other. These results are also simultaneously related to the past studies, that goal orientation has a positive relationship with sales performance [22]. Therefore, enhancing the goal orientation is one of the leading problems to succeed in achieving sales performance.

This research has a dynamic contribution to the research of sales performance and goal orientation which is considered as a new addition in knowledge. However, the current research contributes in forwarding a step toward improving the sales performance. Therefore, this research has combined the large frame of goal orientation and symbolic leadership, in a contest of sales performance individual innovative behavior into a single integrative aspect of FMCG Industry. Also, this research opens the new era of exploring the role of symbolic leadership as a moderator impact on goal orientation and sales performance while exploring the sales industry.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS:

Like many other types of research, this research is also having few limitations and give direction for future research. This research may not represent the other industries or countries as it was primarily conducted on Pakistan FMCG industry. This research is also limited in terms of only Islamabad the results are not appropriate for another region, or states of the country. In future other cities of Pakistan will be taken and other Asian countries can be taken into consideration. This research is limited to an in-depth study of only three variables with one moderator and control variables. However, study data were collected from all the Salesperson, so the future researchers it is suggested that research should be done by including performance deprived goal orientation effect on sales performance to show the negative effect of a variable. The study can be replicated for the telecom and education sector as well. The future research can be done by using different leadership behavior style such as servant leadership as a moderator for the relationship of goal orientation and sales performance.

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