THE NEXUS BETWEEN HUMAN CAPITAL AND SALES GROWTH OF MARKETING FIRMS IN IGBOLAND, NIGERIA

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Abstract
The research evaluates human capital and sales growth of marketing firms in Igboland, Nigeria. The study was conducted to examine the relationship between work experience and sales growth as well as communication skill and sales growth. The researchers adopted the survey research design. The data used in the study were obtained from primary sources. A structured questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. The study adopted the purposive sampling technique. Cronbach Alpha statistic was used to obtain the value of 0.85 as the instrument reliability ratio. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for data analysis. The findings reveal that there is a positive and significant relationship between work experience and sales growth; communication skill and sales growth. The study concludes that human capital boosts sales growth in marketing firms in Igboland Nigeria. The study recommends that marketing enterprises should always design programmes to boost the work experiences of their staff for enhanced sales growth. Also, the marketing enterprises should not relent in consistently improving the communication skills of their workers so that sales growth may always occure at a geometric progression.
Keywords: *Human capital, Growth, Work experience, Communication skill, Sales growth.*

Introduction

Human resources are no doubt, the most important assets in any given organization. In each human resources, Human capital is domiciled. Ogoh (2023) opines that human capital includes any human quality that can improve economic output and productivity. Human capital can include qualities like education, technical training, health, mental and emotional wee-being, communication skills, problem-solving and people management. Investment in these qualities improves the abilities of the labour force. The result is greater output for the economy and higher income for the individual. Human capital comprises all the knowledge, abilities, talents, skills, intelligence, training, judgment and experiences inherent in the human element. Human capital is the knowledge, skills, competencies and other attributes embodied in individuals or group of individuals acquired during their life and used to produce goods, services or ideas in market circumstances. There are factors that determine human capital and they include: skills and qualifications, educational levels, work

experiences, social skills (communication), intelligence, emotional intelligence, judgment, habits and personality traits, creativity (ability to innovate new working practices /products), fame and image of an individual (Ogoh, 2023).

Indeed, Eatough (2021) writes on how to improve human capital. According to Eatough, an obvious way to increase human capital is to hire more people. Human capital can be increased by improving education for the workforce; by providing a work culture that encourages creativity; by dividing labour into specialized niches; by hiring a diverse workforce and by providing ongoing coaching.

This study focuses on the following aspects of human capital: work experience and communication skills. Law (2022) defines work experience as a paid or unpaid work activity that provides a participant with an opportunity to acquire the general training, knowledge and work habits necessary to obtain employment. The purpose of work experience is to improve the employability of those who cannot find unsubsidized employment. Penrose (2021) writes on the benefits of work experience. According to her, work experience gives an understanding of the work environment and what employers expect of their workers; it gives an opportunity to explore possible career options and it enhances increased self-understanding, maturity, independence and self-confidence. It leads to increased motivation to continue study and/or undertake further training; a better understanding of workplace recruitment practices; enhanced opportunities for part-time and casual employment and opportunities to develop work-related competences and acquire skills. Communication skill is another index of human capital examined in this study. Communication skills are the abilities one uses when giving and receiving different kinds of information (Inded, 2022). According to Inded, the communication skills can include but are not limited to effectively communicating ideas to others, actively listening in conservations; giving and receiving critical feedback and public speaking. Communication skills involve listening, speaking, observing and empathizing.

Human capital in organizations may have the capacity to influence the sales growth of the enterprises. In the context of this study, organizational sales growth is the ability of management to use employee work experiences and employee communication skills to improve the amount a company derives from sales compared to a previous, corresponding period of time in which the latter sales exceed the former. Sales growth is a measure of organizational growth. This agrees with the views of Ezeala and Agim (2015) who describe sales growth as the amount a company derives from sales compared to a previous, corresponding period of time in which the latter sales exceed the former. Sales growth is considered positive for a company's survival and profitability. It may result in increased dividends for shareholders and/or higher stock prices.

This study on human capital and sales growth of marketing firms in Igbo land, Nigeria is geared towards investigating how enterprises use their human capital to enhance sales growth with a view to bridging research gaps.

Statement of the Problem

Unarguably, it is quite disturbing to any competent management when it finds it quite difficult to acquire those human elements that possess the necessary skills, abilities, competencies, knowledge, and experiences needed to enhance corporate sales growth. Such may be the reason why any organization that fails to acquire needed human capital rarely experiences sales growth and allied performance indicators.

In addition, the researchers have observed that various empirical studies in the area of human capital and human resources management did not evaluate how job experiences and communication skills influenced sales growth in marketing firms in Igboland, Nigeria. Based on the research gaps identified so far, this study investigates human capital and sales growth of marketing firms in Igboland, Nigeria with a view to bridging the gaps.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to investigate human capital and sales growth of marketing firms in Igboland, Nigeria. The study intends to:

i. assesses the relationship between work experience and sales growth.
ii. examine the relationship between communication skills and sales growth.

Research Questions

Based on the objectives of the study, the researchers developed the following questions:

i. What is the relationship between work experience and sales growth?
iii. To what extent do communication skills affect sales growth?

Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the researchers developed the following null hypotheses:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between work experience and sales growth.
H_{02}: Communication skills do not significantly influence sales growth.

Scope of the Study

The study concentrates on the following organizations in Igboland, Nigeria: PZ Cussons Nigeria Plc, Aba; Cutix Cable, Nnewi; Nigeria Breweries Plc, Enugu and Bullbase Paint Ltd, Oforola-Owerri. The geographical scope therefore includes Aba,

Nnewi, Enugu and Owerri. The content scope shows the relationship between each of work experiences and communication skills and sales growth.

The unit scope of the study includes the functional units in the organization especially the Production, Human Capital, Accounting/Finance and Project Units of the manufacturing firms studied. The unit scope excludes the cleaners and security men because their duties do not relate to the organizational growth measures to be covered in this study.

Review of Related Literature
Conceptual Review

Work (Job) Experience

Agouridis (2022) posits that with work experience, one becomes well-armed to enter the job market; one develops the opportunity to explore how one can apply one's skills and aptitudes as a professional; one gains new skills while understanding the industry in the sense that with job experience, one can evaluate a job and understand if it fits with one's strengths. It helps one to become familiar with a new industry while building a professional network. Such experience is an opportunity to find a carrier mentor and it helps one to identify one's strengths while exposing one to landing on one's dream job.

Communication Skill

It is also helpful to understand the differences in how to communicate through face-to-face interactions, phone conversations and digital communications like email and social media. Communication skills can be improved by way of availing oneself of opportunities for constructive criticism; by practicing improved communication habits; by attending communication skills workshops or classes; and by seeking opportunities to communicate. To communicate effectively in the workplace, one must be clear and concise; one must practice empathy; one must be assertive to reach one's goals; one must be calm and consistent; and one must use and read body language (Inded, 2022).

Sales Growth

There are five specific strategies one can deploy to grow sales namely: increase penetration in existing markets: This implies sticking to one's knitting and grow market share in what one does best already; the second most popular strategy to grow sales is to extend the product line to a new complementary product that existing clients would be pleased one now off; focusing on new client segments will power strong growth. Observe and identify other activities one's client is buying from others that one could make for them; assertively opening up new channels of distribution will increase sales. It will strengthen one's brand ups and downs of one's existing channels; offer of new services to one's clients so they become more

enamored with the firm. So, one is more 'sticky' and harder to leave. One ought to make sure the services are profitable. After one takes into account the drawn out cash flow effect, one will see sales rise and one's relationship solidified (Ezeala and Agim, 2015).

Theoretical Framework

Human Capital Theory

This is a modern extension of Adam Smith's explanation of wage differentials by the so-called net (dis)advantages between different employments. The costs of learning the job are a very important component of net advantage and have led economists such as Gary S. Becker and Jacob Mincer to claim that, other things being equal, personal incomes vary according to the amount of investment in human capital; that is, the education and training undertaken by individuals or groups of workers. A further expectation is that widespread investment in human capital creates in the labour-force the skill-base indispensable for economic growth (Ogoh, 2023).

The survival of the human-capital reservoir was said, for example, to explain the rapid reconstruction achieved by the defeated powers of the Second World War. Human capital arises out of any activity able to raise individual worker productivity. In practice full-time education is, too readily, taken as the principal example. For workers, investment in human capital involves both direct costs, and costs in foregone earnings. Workers making the investment decisions compare the attractiveness of alternative future income and consumption streams, some of which offer enhanced future income, in exchange for higher present training costs and deferred consumption (Ogoh, 2023).

Returns on societal investment in human capital may in principle be calculated in an analogous way. Even in economics, critics of human-capital theory point to the difficulty of measuring key concepts, including future income and the central idea of human capital itself. Not all investments in education guarantee an advance in productivity as judged by employers or the market. In particular, there is the problem of measuring both worker productivity and the future income attached to career openings, except in near-tautological fashion by reference to actual earnings differences which the theory purports to explain.

Empirical studies have suggested that, though some of the observed variation in earnings is likely to be due to skills learned, the proportion of unexplained variance is still high, and must be an attribute of the imperfect structure and functioning of the labour-market, rather than of the productivities of the individuals constituting the labour supply. Human-capital theory has attracted much criticism from sociologists of education and training. In the Marxist renaissance of the 1960s, it was attacked for legitimating so-called bourgeois individualism, especially in the United

States where the theory originated and flourished. It was also accused of blaming individuals for the defects of the system, making pseudo-capitalists out of workers, and fudging the real conflict of interest between the two. However, even discounting these essentially political criticisms, human-capital theory can be regarded as a species of rational-exchange theory and open to a standard critique, by sociologists, of individualist explanations of economic phenomena (https:// www.encyclopedia.com) (Ogoh,2023).

Sean (2021) opines that in the 1960s, Economists Gary Becker and Theodore Schultz pointed out that education and training were investments that could add to productivity. As the world accumulated more and more physical capital, the opportunity cost of going to school declined. Education became an increasingly important component of the workforce. The term was also adopted by corporate finance and became part of intellectual capital, and more broadly as human capital.

Intellectual and human capital are treated as renewable sources of productivity. Organizations try to cultivate these sources, hoping for added innovation or creativity. Sometimes, a business problem requires more than just new machines or more money.

The possible downside of relying too heavily on human capital is that it is portable. Human capital is always owned by the employee, never the employer. Unlike structural capital equipment, a human employee can leave an organization. Most organizations take steps to support their most useful employees to prevent them from leaving for other firms (Sean, 2021).

This theory relates directly to this study. The study focuses on human capital competences and the human capital theory emphasizes on some of these competences especially education and training. This makes the theory relevant for this present study.

Empirical Review

Idigo (2023) assessed intellectual capital and organizational productivity in manufacturing firms in Anambra State, Nigeria. The survey research design was adopted. Multiple regression was used to analyze data. It was discovered that human capital had a positive and significant impact on organizational productivity in the manufacturing firms. Structural capital had a strong significant positive influence on organizational productivity in selected manufacturing firms. Intellectual capital had a strong positive effect on organizational productivity in manufacturing firms in South East Nigeria. Also, Dore and Teixeira (2023) investigated the role of human capital, structural change, and institutional quality on Brazil's economic growth over the last two hundred years (1822 - 2019). The study examines the extent to which human capital, structural capital, and institutional quality contribute to the economic growth of ne of the largest EEs in the world, Brazil, between 1822 and 2019.

Resorting to the ARDL cointegration technique, the results suggest that years of schooling (human capital) have a positive and long-lasting impact on Brazil's economic growth. Sectoral changes toward more advanced and sophisticated manufacturing basis is growth-enhancing in the country. Also, institutional quality does not constitute over the very long-run, a significant booster of Brazilian economic growth. Indeed, Awogbemi (2023) investigated human capital development and Nigeria's economic growth. Contextual analysis served as the main information source of the study in addition to various documentary and electronic sources. The human capital theory is the foundation of the study. It was discovered that there was a clear and evident link between the development of human capital and economic growth in Nigeria.

Balogun, Ajiboye and Olorunmade (2023) evaluated the impact of human capital expenditure on economic growth in Nigeria using the Federal Government on health and education and Nigerias's Gross Domestic Product(GDP) as variables. Testes were carried out using the Johansen Co-integration, normalized co-integrating coefficient and vector error correction Model(VECM) to ascertain the long run and short run effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The results of the analysis indicate that education expenditure has a significant positive effect on GDP. The study discovered that the federal Government's spending on health and education have positively impacted on the economy of Nigeria. Also, Ogoh (2023) evaluated human capital and growth of manufacturing firms in South East Nigeria. The study was conducted to, among others, examine the relationship between work experience and business expansion; work experience and timely product(service) delivery; communication skills and business expansion; communication skills and timely product(service) delivery. The researcher adopted the survey research design. Descriptive and correlation analysis were employed for data analysis. The findings reveal that there was a positive and significant relationship between work experience and business expansion; work experience and timely product(service) delivery; communication skills and business expansion; communication skills and timely product(service) delivery. The study concludes that human capital boosts organizational growth in manufacturing firms in South East Nigeria. The study recommends that the management of manufacturing and service organizations should always avail themselves of opportunities they may have to expand their business in terms of operations, products, human resources, production capacity, and allied aspects of expansion. Again, Lanre-Babalola, Ajose, Tongo, Omoyele, and Aderemi (2023) investigated human capital development and small-medium scale enterprises growth: A critical appraisal of empirical studies. The study employed extant literature. It was discovered that human capital development improved the growth of small and medium scale enterprises.

Wirajing, Nchofoung and Etape (2023) handled 'revisiting the human capital - economic growth nexus in Africa'. The Generalized Method of Moment(GMM)

technique was employed to address the problem of potential sources of endogeneity. The result showed a positive relationship between human capital and economic growth in Africa. Indeed, Ehighebolo and Atimati (2023) investigated 'promoting human capital development and economic growth in Nigeria through innovative teaching-learning approaches. The researches adopted the literature approach. It was found that promoting human capital development enhanced economic growth in Nigeria. Also, Dao and Khuc (2023) examined the impact of openness on human capital: a study of countries by the level of development. The researchers adopted the two-stage least square fixed-effect model with instructional variables. It was found that impact of openness varies greatly among different groups of countries. In addition, Mohammed, A., and Saleh (2023) examined human capital and labour productivity: empirical evidence from developing countries. The study adopted the Dynamic GMM estimator on panel data from 2000 to 2019. It was found that both education and health status impacted on productivity.

Khoruzhy, Khoruzhy, Kubrushiko, Karataeva, and Bitkova (2023) wrote 'comparative analysis of human capital management strategies in the content of digitalization of the national economy'. Extant literature was used in the study. It was found that human capital management strategies boosted digitalization of the national economy. In fact, Chaku, Timnan, Azi, Manomi, Daniel, and Diemsan (2023) assessed time series analysis of human capital development and economic performance: A recent evidence from Nigeria. The study employed time series between 1986 and 2020. The ARDL bound testing model was adopted. It was found that human capital development improved economic performance. Also, Goldin and Kate (2023). The incubator of human capital: the NBER and the use of the human capital paradigm. Extant literature was employed in the study. It was discovered that human capital is very useful in any kind of economy and organization. Furthermore, Wegari, Whakeshum, and Mulatu (2023) examined human capital and its impact on Ethiopian economic growth: ARDL approach to cointegration. The study adopted the ARDL model for 1980 to 2020 data. It study used the Augmented Dickey-Fuller and PhilipsPeron Unit root tests to check the stationarity of the variables. It was found that human capital had good impact on the long run in the economic growth. The GDP expenditure health expenditure, labour force, gross capital formation, total government expenditure, official development assistance, secondary school enrollment, consumer price index, drought and policy change all impacted on economic growth in the long run. Also, Xie, Wang and Zhang (2023) did 'an empirical analysis of the impact of the China Free Trade Zone on the level of human capital based on the Asymptotic PSM-DID Model'. Ex post facto research design was used. It was found that China Free Trade Zone had a positive impact on the level of human capital based on the Asymptotic PSM-DID Model. In fact, Hussain and Chandra (2023) assessed 'human capital formation and economic growth relationships: panel data insights for the Indian States". The ex post facto research design was adopted in the study. Panel cointegration and Wald test were adopted. It

was found that human capital and State incomes had a long run relationship. Indeed, Badwan (2022) investigated "the impact of human capital investment on economic growth – Arab countries evidence from 2001 – 2021'. Ex post facto research design was employed in the study. It was discovered that there was absence of the impact of the enrollment rate in primary and secondary education on the per capita share of GDP. There was presence of a significant and negative impact of the enrollment rate in higher education on the per capita share of GDP. There was a positive morale effect on spending on employment and education, life expectancy on per capita GDP. Again, Akhmadalieva (2023) wrote on 'expanding sources of investment in human capital is to increase the human capital index of the country'. It was an ex post facto study. Statistical techniques were also employed. Findigs revealed that expanding sources of investment in human capital increased the human capital index of the country.

Alhasani, Alhinai and Ahmed (2023) did an empirical study on impact of intellectual human capital on corporate social innovation. It was a survey research. The study adopted the quantitative research method. It was found that there was a positive relationship between intellectual human capital and corporate social innovation. Coupled to the foregoing, Aman-Ullah, Waquas, Amin and Abbas (2022) investigated 'human capital and organizational performance: a moderation study through innovative leadership'. This study investigates the moderating role of innovative leadership in the relationship of human capital capacity, human capital knowledge, and human capital skills with organizational performance. Data was collected through survey questionnaires from 356 managers working in small and middle-level hotels located in the four districts of Saudi Arabia. The present study used convenience sampling, and the data analysis method was partial least square structural equation modelling. Results of this study demonstrate that human capital capacity, human capital knowledge and human capital skills have a significant positive relationship with organizational performance. Results also confirmed a moderation effect of innovative leadership between human capital knowledge and organizational performance. However, the moderation effect of innovative leadership between human capital capacity and human capital skills with organizational performance was not confirmed. Finally, the theoretical contribution, practical implications and future commendations are also discussed. In fact, Olowookere, Olanipekun, Sokunbi, and Aderemi (2022) assessed human capital development and sustainable development: evidence from Nigeria. The researchers used the ex post facto design. It was found that human capital development improved sustainable development in Nigeria. Also, Ogunjobi, Asaleye, Popoola, Awe and Ojo (2022) examined implications of human capital formation on output and employment: evidence from Nigeria. Vector Error Correction Model(NECM) was used in the study. It was found that government expenditure on education and the human capital index has a positive relationship with output. Government expenditure on education/health is statistically significant. Investment in human

capital is not significant with employment. Government expenditure in education has a negative relationship with employment. In addition, Trung (2022) examined "life expectancy and human capital: new empirical evidence". Trung employed the ex post facto research design. The study used panel estimators, OLS and fixed effects estimators. It was found that the impact of health improvements on human capital accumulation turns out to be imprecisely estimated at conventionally accepted levels of statistical significance. Indeed, Okwu, Nissi, Owolabi, and Adejola (2022) examined government education expenditure and human capital development in Nigeria: an empirical investigation. The researchers used secondary data from 1990 to 2020. ADF was used to test for stationarity of the variables. ARDL was used to estimate the model. It was found that recurrent expenditure on education had negative insignificant effects on gross secondary school enrollment rate. Also, recurrent expenditure on health had a positive but insignificant effect. Also, Eze (2022) examined the impact of human capital investment on economic growth in Nigeria: econometric approach of Autoregressive Distributive Lag Model(ARDL). The study employed the descriptive statistics, Augmented Dickey-Fuller Unit Root test and ARDL. It was found that expenditures on education, health and tertiary education enrollment in Nigeria improved economic growth.

Gap Identified in Literature

The gap identified in literature is that empirical studies accessed by the researcher on human capital and organizational growth did not examine the relationships stated in the objectives of this present study. In other words, such studies did not assess the relationship between work experience and sales growth; communication skills and sales growth. This present study bridges these research gaps.

Methodology

The study employed the survey research design in investigating the nexus between human capital and sales growth of marketing firms in Igboland, Nigeria. The instruments of questionnaire, observations and interviews were used for the workers in various marketing organizations across Igboland. The population figures were obtained from various marketing organizations in Igboland. Accordingly, with a total study population of 537, the researcher determined the sample size by employing the Taro Yamane formula for sample size as follows:

$n = N/1+N(e)^2$

Thus:

$$n = \frac{537}{1 + 537(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{537}{2.3425} = 229.24 \cong 229$$

Our sample size is therefore 229 employees.

The purposive sampling method was adopted in the study. Primary sources of data were used in the study. The primary data were gotten using survey tools especially the questionnaire. The validity of the instrument was done by showing the instrument to the supervisors and other experts for their inputs. The items in the survey instrument were also based on the research questions designed for the study. The use of pilot study was adopted for determination of the reliability of the research instrument. The essence was to determine consistency in responses. Data obtained from pilot survey were committed to test of reliability using Cronbach Alpha statistic thus:

The result reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.81. The instrument was therefore 81% reliable. For the data analysis, the descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were adopted to answer the research questions. Correlation analysis was used to test hypotheses. Data were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Data were analyzed at 95% confidence level.

The formula for correlation is:

$$r = \frac{n\sum xy - \sum x \sum y}{\sqrt{[n\sum x^2 - \sum(x)^2]\ [n\sum y^2 - \sum(y)]^2}}$$

The rejection of null hypothesis was based on $P<0.05$.

Questionnaire Analysis

Out of the 229 copies of the questionnaire distributed, only 202 copies were properly filled and returned. This represents 88.2 % return.

Research Question 1:

What is the relationship between work experience and sales growth?

Table 1: Respondents' responses on work experience and sales growth of marketing firms

Q/No	Item	SA	A	UN	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Work experience helps to attract sales and enhance sales growth of marketing firms.	122	21	34	14	14	202	4.13	0.755
2	Management retains and motivates experienced staff in the organization for the purpose of boosting sales growth.	97	76	6	19	4	202	4.02	0.986

Field Survey (2024)

The table 1 above presents data from respondents under study. The result also disclosed a strong agreement by the respondents on their opinion on the relationship between work experience and sales growth of marketing firms. The results further show that the respondents agreed to the facts that: work experience helps to attract sales and enhance sales growth of marketing firms with a $\bar{\bar{x}} \pm \text{S.D}$ of 4.13 ± 0.755; management retains and motivates experienced staff in the organization for the purpose of boosting sales growth (with a $\bar{\bar{x}} \pm \text{S.D}$ of 4.02 ± 0.986).

Research Question 2:
To what extent do communication skills affect sales growth?

Table 2: Respondents' responses on the relationship between communication skill and sales growth in marketing firms

Q/N	Item	SA	A	UN	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
3	Communication skills are drivers of sales and sales growth in marketing firms.	91	45	30	23	13	202	3.88	0.919
4	Managements of marketing firms send their workers for training programmes to advance their communication skills for effective sales growth.	176	143	44	11	29	403	4.31	0.832

Field Survey (2024)

The table 2 above presents data from respondents on the relationship between communication skill and sales growth in marketing firms. There is a high level agreement by the respondents on the opinion that communication skills are drivers of sales and sales growth in marketing firms as the result accounted for a mean of 3.88 and a standard deviation of 0.919. The result has indicated that the majority of the respondents agreed to the item statement that: managements of marketing firms send their workers for training programmes to advance their communication skills for effective sales growth (with a $\bar{x} \pm \text{S.D}$ of 4.31 ± 0.832).

Test of Hypotheses
Here, the hypotheses associated with the study were tested. The hypotheses were tested in order to find out whether the difference in opinion was significant to draw conclusion.

Ho_1: *There is no significant relationship between work experience and sales growth.*

Table 5: Correlation analysis on work experience and sales growth.

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Coefficient	P-value
Work experience	4.13	0.755	0.981	0.001
Sales growth	4.20	0.986		

Source: SPSS Correlation Analysis Output (2024).

The result on table 5 presents the correlation between work experience and sales growth in marketing firms. The result shows a p-value of 0.001 and correlation coefficient of 0.981. The result shows a $p - value \leq 0.05$ level of significance, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative which states that there is a significant relationship between work experience and sales growth in marketing firms.

H_{02}: *Communication skills do not significantly influence sales growth.*

Table 6: Correlation analysis on communication skills and sales growth in marketing firms

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Coefficient	P-value
Communication skills	3.88	0.919	0.844	0.001
Sales growth	4.31	0.832		

Source: SPSS Correlation Analysis Output (2024).

The result on table 6 presents the correlation on communication skills and sales growth in marketing firms. The result shows a p-value of 0.001 and correlation coefficient of 0.844. The p-value is less than 0.05 being the level of significance, thereby rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative. Therefore, the correlation coefficient between communication skills and sales growth in marketing firms is statistically significant. This means a positive and a strong relationship existing between communication skills and sales growth in marketing firms.

Findings

Based on the analysis, the researchers found that:

1. There is a significant relationship between work experience and sales growth in marketing firms.
2. Communication skills significantly influence sales growth in marketing firms.

Discussion

In this section, the researchers discussed the findings made in the study. The fact that work experience helps to attract sales and enhance sales growth of marketing firms as

shown on Table 1 indicates that job experience plays a critical role in business management, survival and growth. This may be the reason why management retains and motivates experienced staff in the organization for the purpose of boosting sales growth as shown on the same Table 1. This agrees with the findings in this study. Ogoh (2023) evaluated human capital and growth of manufacturing firms in South East Nigeria. The study was conducted to, among others, examine the relationship between work experience and business expansion; work experience and timely product(service) delivery; communication skills and business expansion; communication skills and timely product(service) delivery. The researcher adopted the survey research design. Descriptive and correlation analysis were employed for data analysis. The findings reveal that there was a positive and significant relationship between work experience and business expansion; work experience and timely product(service) delivery; communication skills and business expansion; communication skills and timely product(service) delivery. Ogoh's study concludes that human capital boosts organizational growth in manufacturing firms in South East Nigeria. The study recommends that the management of manufacturing and service organizations should always avail themselves of opportunities they may have to expand their business in terms of operations, products, human resources, production capacity, and allied aspects of expansion. This agrees with the findings in this study.

Given that communication skills are drivers of sales and sales growth in marketing firms as shown on Table 2 above imply that those who possess these skills are great assets to their organizations. It pays when a business worker can effectively write, use technological resources to reach customers and colleagues, listen effectively and become the communication expert the firm can be proud of. It is not therefore surprising that managements of marketing firms send their workers for training programmes to advance their communication skills for effective sales growth just as the same Table 2 indicates. Aman-Ullah, Waquas, Amin and Abbas (2022) investigated 'human capital and organizational performance: a moderation study through innovative leadership'. This study investigates the moderating role of innovative leadership in the relationship of human capital capacity, human capital knowledge, and human capital skills with organizational performance. Data was collected through survey questionnaires from 356 managers working in small and middle-level hotels located in the four districts of Saudi Arabia. The present study used convenience sampling, and the data analysis method was partial least square structural equation modelling. Results of this study demonstrate that human capital capacity, human capital knowledge and human capital skills have a significant positive relationship with organizational performance. Results also confirmed a moderation effect of innovative leadership between human capital knowledge and organizational performance. The foregoing agrees with the findings in this very study.

Conclusion

The study concludes that human capital impacts positively on sales growth of marketing firms in Igboland, Nigeria. Work experience actually helps to attract sales and enhance sales growth of marketing firms in Igboland. The study therefore infers that any

marketing firm that relegates work experience to the background risks not only sales growth challenges, but a total corporate failure.

The study also submits further that communication skills are great drivers of sales and sales growth in marketing firms. Enterprises that lack the kind of workforce that possess communication skills are indeed dangerously disadvantaged in a fiercely competitive business environment like in Nigeria. The paper therefore concludes that human capital remains the software of the human resource without which the individual worker has nothing to offer for sustainable sales growth in the marketing firms.

Recommendations

In alignment with the findings made in the study, the research recommends that:

1. Management needs to always invest in employee work experience for seamless and consistent sales growth in the marketing firms.
2. Corporate workers should not hesitate in making extra efforts to improve their communication skills so as to always ensure that sales growth in marketing firms remains positive, pleasant and sustainable.

Contribution to Knowledge

The study contributes to knowledge by providing empirical literature on the relationships between work experience and sales growth; communication skill and sales growth in marketing firms in Igboland. It adds to the existing body of knowledge as it relates to human capital indicators and sales growth of firms in Igboland, Nigeria.

Implications for Further Studies

This present study focused on human capital indicators of work experience and communication skills and how they influence sales growth in Igboland, Nigeria. Future researchers need to investigate other indices of human capital not handled in this present study example knowledge, talents, educational levels, qualifications and health and how they influence the sales growth of marketing firms in Igboland and in other climes in the Nigerian nation. Also, further researches should be done with other methodologies other than survey research design as used in this present study hence researchers need to explore epistemological, ex post facto and desk research approaches in assessing issues relating to human capital and sales growth in Igboland, Nigeria.

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