

Determinants of Cross-Functional Sales Performance Variables in IT/ITes

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Abstract

This exploratory research helps the IT/ITes companies to identify the cross-functional factors and their impact, which leads to better revenue growth for IT companies in Bangalore along with a statistical model to measure the company performance based on the identified factors through factor analysis.

This research does not focus on professional skills, and demographics. The researcher referred a lot of previous studies in this field and concluded with the 23 antecedents suggested and strongly used in previous studies, and 10 more on researcher's judgmental choice from experience, 33 questions addressing 33 indicators from 26 sample size from IT companies for the pilot survey. This research identifies the 19 determinants of cross-functional sales performance indicators with very high reliability (Cronbach alpha = 0.870), as a precursor of the parent study and factor analysis. These indicators put negative/ positive effects on the overall organization's sales performance and the revenue growth of the company. Creating a statistical model, based on the final and parent survey post to this pilot survey analysis, is unique and unprecedented to measure the current industry standard or, benchmarking of a company with respect to the same industry also leads for better strategic support to the sales team towards the revenue growth.

Keywords: Sales performance, cross-functional factors, sales performance factors, factor analysis, Salesperson performance, Strategy, Statistical Model

Introduction:

Less than 53% sales people globally achieve their targets. Most sales teams are over dependent on a few "rock stars" to meet their quota. The future belongs to organizations, sales people who add deep value to customers, leverage technology, other team members in the company to drive efficiency and effectiveness. The research put insights towards identifying core problems that hold sales teams back.

Sales Performance = F (Cross functional factors)

A salesperson is perhaps the only direct link between customer and the organization (Krishnan B et. al., 2002). “Sales performance” is the revenue generated by any company through the sales team. This also leads to the sales and revenue impact due to the (non)performance of cross functional departments like, marketing, collection, pre-sales, company image etc. These are the indicators which influence the overall sales performance.

Literature Review:

India “referred to as the back office of the world mainly to IT and ITes Sector” (CII- PwC, 2010). In 1993, the outsourcing work started in India, to support book keeping work of American Express. With the Y2K problem and large skilled personnel were required to do database-correction job (S. Annapoorna et. al., 2009); also, fixing the codes of critical computer programs (before 2000 arrival) was outsourced to India (Dixit Ritam, 2012).

Software exports (IT-BPM) are expected to grow 7-8% and the domestic market is expected to expand by 10-11% (NASSCOM, 2018). In FY 18 India IT exports touched USD 123 Bn, and domestically to USD 168 Bn in 2017-18. Indian IT and BPM sector expects growth to 339 Bn USD by 2015 (India IT/ITes services, Ministry of commerce and industry, GoI, Online).

Is this only growth? No! The future era will bring set of new opportunities, and may initiate basic changes in business acumen (CII- PwC, 2010). Government of India aims to get 8.2% growth rate (12th. 5year plan, GoI), down from growth rate of 9% (11th. 5year plan, GoI). The recession forced companies to consolidate and focus on the optimal utilization of the available resources along with productivity, efficiency increase. In BPO Customer Care is a big contributor (CII- PwC, 2010).

IT is no longer considered to be the reliable employer anymore (S. Annapoorna et. Al., 2009). The survey says that 19.4% talents are attracted for guaranteed incentives/ Variable pay (KPMG report, 2017). Hence, drafting proper compensation benefits plan for Sales operation team of a company becomes important. Today’s matured and developed IT(es) industry is because of many internal and/or external reasons (S. Annapoorna et. al., 2009).

Churchil et al. (1985) published research work on “the determinants of salesperson performance”, and the antecedents (a thing that existed before or logically precedes another) of sales performance, is based on a statistical analysis, combining the results of multiple

scientific studies(meta-analysis) for the period between 1918- 1982 (76 years of previous research work) . The author suggested five factors that influences a salesperson's job behaviour and performance.

Also, researchers found different categories like skill level, role perceptions, motivation, aptitude, personal factors, and organizational factors with three moderators(Walker et al. 1977 and Churchill et al.,1985).

Michael J. Spendolini (1993) made a distinction in between external and internal benchmarking. Benchmarking is a management technique to improve departmental/ organisational operation (Leon Mann et. al., 1998). There are factors influencing the sales performance in SMEs also (Marc Thibault, 2001). A review on modelling efforts forces managers to focus of customer satisfaction when designing strategies (Szymanski et. al., 2001).

Mohan V. Tatikonda et. al. (2001) shows the organisational process factors are linked to the achievement of operational outcome targets for quality, cost, and development capabilities (Mohan V. Tatikonda et. al., 2001). Marketing approaches depends on completely on the consumer's opinion (Quareshi Khanam Tahira).

Rentz et. al. (2002) argue that the high number of researches focused on selling skills after Churchill et al. (1985). Rentz et. Al (2002) present a model & scale on selling skills based on the sales literature and report. Surely, Human Resource department plays an important role on sales person's performance (Rentz et. al., 2002).

Willem Verbeke et. al. (2011) focuses on the sales performance literature after the period, the Churchill et al. (1985) meta-analysis covered the field of sales performance research from 1918 to 1982, performing a meta-analysis to gain insights into the predictive power of sales-performance determinants across empirical research models of the past 25 years. In the interim, other meta-analyses have taken place.

However, Verbeke et. al. (2011) assesses sales- performance determinants was researched since Churchill et al. (1985). Analyzing correlations between antecedents, and provided a 2 stage SEM to identify the independent effects of determinants on sales-performance. This was basically the model make-up based on the secondary research and not the primary research.

The factors affecting sales force performance (rural/urban areas) are the notable driver for any organizational success (Neema Geeta et. al., 2015).

In India as the level of competition keep on increasing day by day, it is essential to understand how consumer compares price-quality-value of a product/service (Quareshi Khanam Tahira). The sales function is undergoing through an unparalleled form from immature to mature stage (Thomas w Leigh et. al., 2001) and there is a need to assess the effects of cross functional factors on sales performance.

Research Gaps:

The sales function is undergoing through unquestionable transformation from an immature form to more distinct stages (Thomas w Leigh et. al., 2001). 1) This becomes important for researcher particularly to identify the various cross-functional factors pertaining to IT/ITes sector in India; 2) Previous studies did not do any research focusing on Indian IT sector and did not provide any idea to recalibrate the cross functional indicators / factors with respect to the external industry practice and standard; 3) Previous studies showed only the relationship through structural equation modelling, but they failed to predict a statistical model to quantify the sales performance, so that IT companies can understand where they are standing from business stand point and can identify easily where is the point of problem.

Objectives of the final Study:

1. To understand the development of IT/ITes companies in India.
2. To identify the various cross-functional indicators which may impact sales-performance.
3. To assess the effect of cross-functional factors on sales performance.
4. To construct a statistical model to assess the impact of identified cross functional indicators on sales performance.

Hypothesis:

H1: Sales performance and cross functional factors has a significant relationship in IT/ITes

Research Methodology:

Researchers require both the secondary and primary data source. To collect the primary data, survey method is done through structured questionnaire, and the review method for the collection of secondary data. The pilot- survey initiated to understand the actual variables,

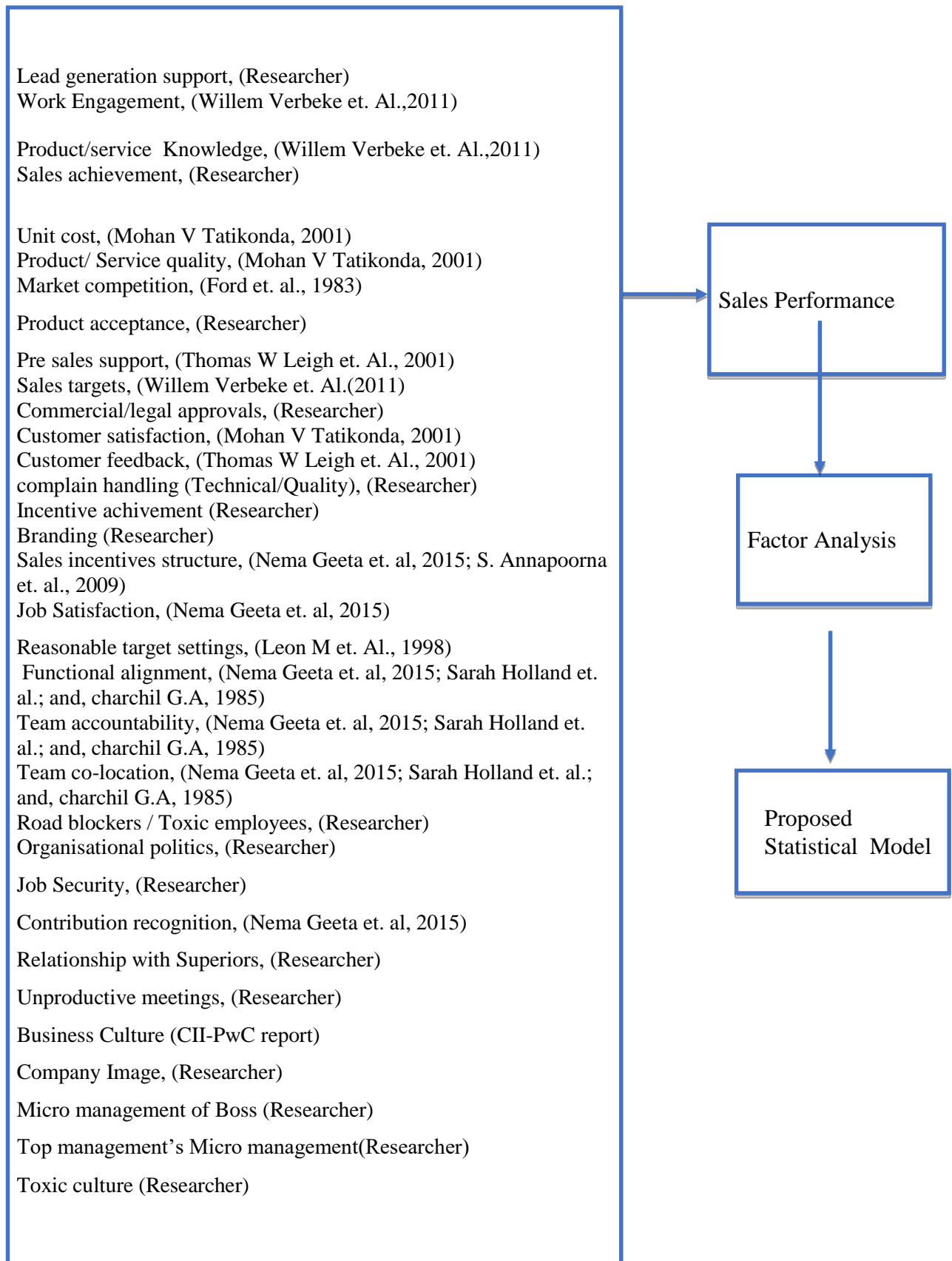
sample size determination, understanding the descriptive statistics of the data is important before conducting the parent study. Pilot survey and analysis is the precursor to the parent survey.

Sources of Data:

Secondary data from different sources such as websites articles, blogs, google scholar, plos.org, EBSCO, google.com, research gate, and other scholars' online portals, books will be used. The primary data is mainly through survey among the sales personnel of IT / ITES companies in Bangalore.

Conceptual Framework:

From the available literature researcher has identified the following antecedents to start the initial work. Also, based on researcher's capability and after doing pilot survey researcher added few indicators/ variables for the final survey.



Sampling Method:

Random sampling technique (Probability Sampling) is used, wherein initially, identified IT/ITes companies in Bangalore and then Random employees will be selected for the survey respondents. All respondents are direct/ indirect contributors to the company sales performance.

Sample Size for Pilot Survey:

Researcher considered 26 samples as accepted pilot study sample size, the reason backed by the literature survey. It “suggests that a pilot study sample size should be 5% - 10% of the sample projected for the parent study” (Connelly, 2008), and (Treece and Treece, 1982). However, this depends on several influencing factors (Hertzog, 2008). However, Isaac and Michael (1995), and Hill (1998) opined between 10 and 30 participants for pilot survey research including Julious (2005) and van Belle (2002) in the medical field.

Variables, tools and measurement scale:

For data collection Survey questionnaire method is used. Pilot Questionnaire is divided into 3 types of questions. 1) Pure Demographics questions like subject name, Company Name, email id, contact number etc. 2) Qualifying questions like organization category (IT/ Non-IT), Type (MNC/ Non-MNC/ Start-up), subject is working as Sales person directly or, indirectly, work experience of subject, where responded by subject less than 1 years of work experience is not considered for the better result of the study. And 3) The questions linked to the cross functional parameters. There exists open ended and close ended, both types of questions, which allowed subjects to respond their complete views. Most of the questions are assessed in five-point ‘Likert Scale’, 1 with ‘Strongly Disagree’, and 5 ‘strongly Disagree’.

Data Analysis:

1. **Survey return rate:** Initially in total got 36 responses after online survey questionnaire sent to 90 people. It showed 31.11% return rate, but out of which 26 found to be valid as per the above mentioned qualifying criteria for the pilot study.
2. **Sales target vs. Sales achievements:** From the descriptive table we can see the average sales target is 31.85 Lakh Rupees per month and the sales achievement is close to 15.83 lakh Rupees per month. It means mostly sales people missed their targets due to the effect of other variables mentioned in the study.

3. Outlier Analysis: There is no outlier in the entire data set. Researcher did not find any z-score value more than ± 3 including the sales target and sales achievement variable outcome from the study.

4. Normality Analysis: Researchers at this point, pilot survey with 26 sample size, data analysis, ignored the result of K-S test or S-W test for normality as the final survey should comprise more than 300 sample. Kim (2013) mentioned, that the Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests are “unreliable” with big samples, i.e., > 300 . In essence, they are too “sensitive”.

To understand the normality of the data Mayers (2013, p. 53) suggested the skewness and the kurtosis values that a cut-off of ± 1.96 should be used for samples smaller than 50, a cut-off of ± 2.58 (samples 51 to 100), and a cut-off of ± 3.29 (samples > 100). Also, here's another view from Peter Samuels on ResearchGate, for the skewness and Kurtosis it matters the absolute size relative to their standard errors. The better rule of thumb is it should be less than twice their standard errors. Twice of the value is incidentally a better estimate than 1.96 because the exact value actually increases above 2 for small sample sizes.

For pilot survey data analysis 26 sample size is considered and hence, researchers decided to follow Peter Samuels for better focus than granting ± 1.96 value. The standard error values of Skewness and Kurtosis are 0.456 and 0.887 respectively. Hence, doubling the value we get 0.91 for skewness and 1.77 for kurtosis acceptable values to consider to consider the normality.

According to the Descriptive table sales target(1.142), Team accountability(0.945), Team collocation (1.195) and Company Image(0.972) are having higher skewness value than 0.91 but all of the variables have lesser values than cut-off Kurtosis value (1.77). As the sample size is less, and researchers' end aim is to do the factor analysis and also at the final survey this is expected to have more than 300 sample, we can simply ignore this deviation and go to go as normal data.

5. Missing Data: The pilot survey did not have any missing data as the entire survey was done via online and fields made mandatory to answer.

6. Multicollinearity: Researchers could not find any correlation value > 0.90 among any close two variables. Hence, concluded with no-multicollinearity exists.

7. Test of Homogeneity: Interestingly, Lavin's test shows F value is very high and with high significant p-value ($0.018 < 0.05$), null hypothesis is rejected, hence the data is

‘Nonhomogeneous’ (Sales achievement and Type of companies like MNC and Start-Ups).

Both 95% confidence value (lower/ upper) none is Zero (0). Hence, result is reliable.

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q3_Product_Knowledge	56.54	158.898	0.072	0.87
Q4_sales_achievement	57.54	154.098	0.172	0.871
Q7_market_competition	57.35	144.635	0.575	0.857
Q8_product_acceptance	58.12	154.746	0.164	0.87
Q10_sales_target	57.46	155.458	0.121	0.873
Q11_legal_support	57.58	152.734	0.206	0.87
Q12_cust_satisfaction	57.96	138.278	0.617	0.854
Q13_cust_feedback	57.73	135.805	0.687	0.85
Q17_Incentive_structure	57.54	156.818	0.073	0.874
Q18_Job_satisfaction	56.73	155.405	0.24	0.867
Q23_Road_blocker	57.15	133.175	0.851	0.844
Q24_organizational_politics	57.23	129.705	0.868	0.841
Q25_job_security	57.12	148.506	0.324	0.866
Q26_contribution_recognition	57.65	136.955	0.65	0.852
Q28_unproductive_meetings	57.35	136.795	0.704	0.85
Q29_company_culture	58.54	154.578	0.285	0.866
Q30_company_image	58.54	134.498	0.668	0.851
Q32_Micro_management (top_level)	57.23	142.825	0.542	0.857
Q33_toxic_environment	57.81	132.402	0.767	0.846

8. **Independent sample t-test:** Also, an independent sample t test reported a significant difference in Sales achievement by MNC and Start-Up salespersons, $t(21.981)=6.534, p<0.018, 95\% C.I [2.133 \text{ Lakh} - 18.942 \text{ Lakh}]$. The MNC sales persons are on an average sales achievement ($M=18.76 \text{ Lakh}, SD= 14.71 \text{ Lakh}$) as compared to the Start-Up ($M=8.22 \text{ Lakh}, SD= 5.49 \text{ Lakh}$) Salespersons.

	D4_company_Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Q16_sales_achievement	MNC	19	18.7611	14.71409	3.37564
	Start- Up	6	8.2233	5.49288	2.24246

Table: Independent Sample t- Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Q16_sales_achievement	Equal variances assumed	6.534	.018	1.696	23	.103	10.53772	6.21256	-2.31394	23.38938
	Equal variances not assumed			2.600	21.981	.016	10.53772	4.05260	2.13272	18.94272

9. **Reliability Test:** After deleting all the -ve 'corrected-item-total- correlation' values of the applicable variables, researchers found the Sales performance subscale consisted of 19 items ($\alpha = 0.870$).
10. It is very good to accept the internal consistency reliability value with 19 variables out of 33 variables and good to go for further analysis.

Table: Item-Total Statistics				
	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Q3_Product_Knowledge	56.54	158.898	0.072	0.87
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Q18_Job_satisfaction	56.73	155.405	0.24	0.867
Q23_Road_blocker	57.15	133.175	0.851	0.844
Q24_organizational_politics	57.23	129.705	0.868	0.841
Q25_job_security	57.12	148.506	0.324	0.866
Q26_contribution_recognition	57.65	136.955	0.65	0.852
Q28_unproductive_meetings	57.35	136.795	0.704	0.85
Q29_company_culture	58.54	154.578	0.285	0.866
Q30_company_image	58.54	134.498	0.668	0.851
Q32_Micro_management_top_level	57.23	142.825	0.542	0.857
Q33_toxic_environment	57.81	132.402	0.767	0.846

Hence, Sales performance = F(19 cross-functional variables mentioned in the table)

This is the precursor of the final factor analysis which will be done after final survey with more than 300 samples.

Limitations:

In this study no moderator and mediator effect are analyzed and this paper is focused based on the pilot survey data only and all the results are interpreted accordingly.

Conclusion:

This paper is the pre-cursor to the main study based on the actual final survey data. This paper sets the context that what is done and expected before the final research result outcome . currently got 19 cross functional variables for future factor analysis. The other supporting descriptive data pattern and results are encouraging and suitable to conduct the final research. After the main research, researchers expect to come out with the model to measure the IT industry performance so that one can understand when exactly a company needs to focus the required changes for any cross functional department, which will be a good sign to manage their strategic portfolio.

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Appendix

Table: Descriptive Statistics

	Mean		Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Q1_Lead_Generation	3.23	0.334	1.704	-0.285	0.456	-1.752	0.887
Q2_work_Engagement	3.42	0.185	0.945	-0.068	0.456	-0.823	0.887
Q3_Product_Knowledge	4.19	0.124	0.634	-0.166	0.456	-0.403	0.887
Q4_sales_achievement	3.19	0.229	1.167	-0.077	0.456	-1.268	0.887
Q5_product_price	3.19	0.215	1.096	-0.412	0.456	-0.51	0.887
Q6_product_quality	3.77	0.244	1.243	-0.744	0.456	-0.131	0.887
Q7_market_competition	3.38	0.208	1.061	-0.434	0.456	-0.475	0.887
Q8_product_acceptance	2.62	0.215	1.098	0.859	0.456	-0.072	0.887
Q9_Presales_support	3.5	0.237	1.208	-0.368	0.456	-0.995	0.887
Q10_sales_target	3.27	0.232	1.185	-0.569	0.456	-0.995	0.887
Q11_legal_support	3.15	0.24	1.223	-0.316	0.456	-0.829	0.887
Q12_cust_satisfaction	2.77	0.273	1.394	0.064	0.456	-1.27	0.887
Q13_cust_feedback	3	0.277	1.414	-0.276	0.456	-1.387	0.887
Q14_Complain_handling	3.81	0.215	1.096	-0.575	0.456	-0.9	0.887
Q15_sales_target	31.8577	5.25744	26.80778	1.142	0.456	0.584	0.887
Q16_sales_achievement	15.8319	2.67706	13.6504	0.901	0.456	-0.268	0.887
Q17_Incentive_structure	3.19	0.235	1.201	-0.25	0.456	-1.031	0.887
Q18_Job_satisfaction	4	0.147	0.748	-0.62	0.456	0.821	0.887
Q19_Reasonable_target	2.54	0.237	1.208	0.124	0.456	-1.591	0.887
Q20_functional_alignment	3.08	0.214	1.093	0.236	0.456	-1.585	0.887
Q21_Team_accountability	3.58	0.201	1.027	-0.945	0.456	0.357	0.887
Q22_Team_collocation	2.35	0.2	1.018	1.195	0.456	0.865	0.887
Q23_Road_blocker	3.58	0.255	1.301	-0.418	0.456	-1.257	0.887
Q24_organizational_politics	3.5	0.284	1.449	-0.641	0.456	-0.944	0.887
Q25_job_security	3.62	0.255	1.299	-0.75	0.456	-0.646	0.887
Q26_contribution_recognition	3.08	0.277	1.412	0.408	0.456	-1.655	0.887
Q27_relationship_with_boss	4.31	0.108	0.549	0.074	0.456	-0.524	0.887
Q28_unproductive_meetings	3.38	0.261	1.329	-0.34	0.456	-1.234	0.887
Q29_company_culture	2.19	0.147	0.749	0.28	0.456	0.114	0.887
Q30_company_image	2.19	0.299	1.524	0.972	0.456	-0.593	0.887
Q31_micro_management_boss	2.96	0.269	1.371	0.377	0.456	-1.464	0.887
Q32_Micro_mgmt_top_level	3.5	0.243	1.241	-0.68	0.456	-0.616	0.887
Q33_toxic_environment	2.92	0.288	1.468	0.225	0.456	-1.323	0.887