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IMPACT OF BUYER-SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS ON ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE: EXPERIENCE FROM GRAPES PROCESSING INDUSTRIES IN DODOMA REGION, TANZANIA

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ABSTRACT

For so long, buyer-supplier relationships are embraced towards enhancing organisational performance in manufacturing industries. This study analysed the impact of the buyer-supplier relationships on organisational performance among grapes processing industries in Dodoma, Tanzania. The buyer-supplier relationships in terms of sharing of information, sharing of knowledge, supplier base reduction and joint problem solving were regressed on the organisational performance to determine the impact of buyer-supplier relationships on the organisational performance. A cross-sectional research design was adopted and data from 100 participants were collected through a questionnaire. A multiple regression analysis was used to analyse the relationship between information sharing, knowledge sharing, supplier base reduction and joint problem solving on organisational performance. Results indicated that information sharing (p=0.004), knowledge sharing (p=0.000) and joint problem solving (p=0.000) were positively and significantly related to organisational performance. However, supplier base reduction (p=0.392) was positive but not statistically significant related to the organisational performance. Hence, the study concludes that buyer-supplier relationships determined the organisational performance of surveyed wine manufacturers in the Dodoma region.It was recommended that wine manufacturing firms to develop strong mechanisms that may control buyer-supplier relationships. These may be done by strengthening contracts used to engage grapes suppliers within the region and frequent training to enable farmers to produce high-quality grapes for wine production.

Keywords: Buyer-supplier relationships, supply chain, organisational performance, Dodoma, and Tanzania

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1. INTRODUCTION

As a result of globalisation and increased competition in the business undertakings, many firms have resorted to improving the delivery performance of their products, quality and better responsiveness to the customers and cost reduction(Kannan & Tan, 2006).Business firms are striving to secure deferent ways of controlling supply chains basically in integrating and evaluating the significance of suppliers in the activities of the firm's (Kannan & Tan, 2006). Increasingly the firms are building co-operative relationships with their parties of the supply chain for the sake of attaining efficiencies, flexibility and competitive advantage(Nyaga *et al.*,2010). The collaborative relationships are instrumental in enabling the firms to adopt long-term contract strategies that allow the partners in the supply chain to generate unique value, which is difficult to generate by only one part (Nyaga *et al.,* 2010).

Collaboration among firms is essential in achieving competitive advantage due to the arising benefits that include reducing competition, combining the firm's strategic resources, increasing the availability of resources and increasing creativity and innovation. Lastly, the firms' general performance will increase by achieving more significant profit(Prior, 2012). In the past decade, firms have recognised the importance of managing the supply chain in broader business view strategies and, in specific, to establish a good relationship across the supply chain partners (Hsu *et al.,* 2008). By comparing with the traditional relationship, which is just exchanging goods and money, it was observed that collaboration with suppliers might result in more incredible benefits to the organisation(Nyaga *et al.,* 2010). But to achieve the good results of collaboration, organisations should invest in technology and human resources (Nyaga *et al.,* 2010).

A strand of literature has shown that buyer-supplier relationships significantly enhance the smooth business process by reducing various uncertainties(Rashed *et al.*, 2010; Narasimhan *et al.*, 2013). By implementing buyer-supplier relationships, organisations will benefit by reducing the number of suppliers, proper demand forecasting, delivery performance and more excellent performance of the organisation(Prior, 2012).Also, it should be noted that relationships with suppliers enable organisations to secure additional inventories and improve their operational capacity when other suppliers fail to deliver (Mchopa *et al.*, 2020). However, to develop a good successful relationship, there must be trust and commitment among members involved in relationships such as buyer and supplier(Prior, 2012). In any relationship, trust is considered the critical factor that accelerates the relationship elements. It tends to facilitate the rich, smooth exchange of information while also increasing the possibility of members relying upon each other.

For the better performance of the wine industry, it was highly emphasised to have long-term relationships between the wine industry and suppliers of grapes, to deliver the added advantages of assurance of market and consistent supply of grapes, improve collaboration on technical issues between the wine processing industry and supplier of grapes, potential product adaptation. The reduction in the level of uncertainties as well as enhancements in the capacity of the wine

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processing industry to plan and forecast production schedules(Somogyi *et al*, 2010). Also, the implementation of long-term relationships between the wine industry and grapes growers will influence the grapes growers to adopt suitable production methods by better treating grapes and increasing production.

Many studies indicate that organisational performance, such as quality achievement, cost reduction and profit generation, is influenced by a good and long-term relationship between suppliers and buyers(Nassar *et al.,* 2019). Furthermore, studies indicate that creating a long-term relationship between buyer and supplier suggests that trust, openness, and honesty should be considered for better organisational performance. In addition, to increase the organisation's performance, partnership development is significant because the partners will share information, communication, and commitment (Rashed *et al.,* 2010). Regardless of the importance of the buyer-supplier relationships in adding value to the organisation, many organisations still failed to appreciate the advantages of relationships. This leads to failure of information flow within the supply chain, whether due to incapability of adopting or reluctance to do so, or a lack of knowledge about how to do so(Hsu *et al.,* 2008). Usually, the organisation that believes and value the relationship between buyer-supplier through working together with the supplier to respond to various changes in the marketplace they can be able to offer better services to the customers, and the performance will be at a higher level compared to the organisation that does not adopt buyer-supplier relationships(Wu*et al.,* 2010). Therefore, this study intends to analyse the impact of the buyer-supplier relationship on the organisational performance of the grapes processing industries in Tanzania.

2. THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

2.1 Relational Governance

Relational governance was adopted to study variables related to inter-organisational relationships in establishing organisational performance. Most economic exchanges contain embodied personal relationships (Carey and Lawson, 2011). Also, it has been noted by Yeh, (2015) that exchange is based on existing relations among buyers and suppliers are encouraged through relational governance on working towards achieving mutual benefits. The buyer-supplier relationship is related to the existing relationship between buyers and suppliers towards mutual benefits. For instance, information sharing has been considered among relational instruments used in relational governance (Bonatto *et al.,* 2020). Other tools may include sharing knowledge, supply base reduction and joint problem solving between buyers and suppliers that are assumed to explain the relationships between buyers and suppliers.

2.2 Variables conceptualization and Hypotheses

2.2.1 Sharing of information

Communication is essential in buyer-supplier relationships (Msemwa *et al.,* 2017). Information sharing is a crucial aspect of the supply chain because it facilitates smooth communication between each other. It can be considered an essential part of the organisation because it reduces

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uncertainty and enhances visibility (Rashed *et al.*, 2010). Proper information sharing and flow in the organisation enabled easy access of data in the supply chain stages. It allows the parties in the supply chain to collaborate in different activities for better performance.(Hsu *et al.*, 2008) argued that to reduce inefficiencies, create opportunities and increase collaboration for better performance of the firms, sharing of information is considered as good weapon. Also, literature shows that for better success of the firms in a supplier development context, sharing information timely and frequently is a more significant concern (Fawcett *et al.*, 2007). For the firms to identify critical issues concerning their suppliers, information sharing within a firm is necessary for helping organisation members (Narasimhan *et al.*, 2013). It's believed that proper sharing of information increases the performance of the organisation. Thus, the study hypothesised that:

H_1: There is a significant relationship between sharing of information and organisational performance

2.2.2 Sharing of knowledge

Buyer-supplier sharing of knowledge is essential in today's business context. Sharing knowledge adds value to the organisation's performance because it increases efficiency and effectiveness (Nazir & Shah, 2014).Also, the findings indicate that sharing of knowledge in the organisation facilitates the firm's innovation capability(Nazir & Shah, 2014).The key to the attainment of competitive advantage is knowledge sharing and its practical implementation. In the buyer-supplier relationship context, the exchange of knowledge is a crucial part of a relationship's success because it enables the faster achievement of the intended performance and increases the possibility of a relation to last longer (Rashed *et al.*, 2010). The study should observe that the absence of knowledge sharing can directly affect the organisation's performance so that organisational performance depends on the availability of knowledge to enhance organisational performance (Rashed *et al.*, 2010). It is from this base the study hypothesises the following:

H_2: There is a significant relationship between knowledge sharing and organisational performance

2.2.3 Reduction of the Supplier base

Supply base reduction reduces the number of suppliers to deal with to remain with the few best performers for supply chain organisational performance. For the firms to increase performance in terms of quality product, better services, delivering on time and achieving competitive advantages, it's better to remain with few suppliers capable of performing activities in an efficient manner (Sarkar & Mohapatra, 2006).Therefore, the organisation's performance depends on the supplier's competence to get a capable supplier to reduce the number of non-competent to get a quality supplier for the supply goods with standard to the buyer. Therefore, there is a need to reduce the number of suppliers that were helpful in the organisation's performance. To establish a long-term relationship with suppliers in a supply chain management context, it is recommended to apply supplier base reduction strategies (Nazir & Shah, 2014). Reducing the

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supplier base increases organisational performance in the assurance of supplies, quality products, and cost reduction. Therefore, the third hypothesis of the study states as follows:

H_3: There is a significant relationship between reduction of supplier base and organisational performance

2.2.4 Joint problem solving

This is a collaborative method through which the parties identify, discuss, and settle their dispute; the study should observe that presence of joint problem solving will facilitate the organisation to meet various challenge facing the relationship between buyer and seller, and through that challenge, it will pave the way to the organisational performance(Claycomb & Frankwick, 2010) Better practice of buyer-supplier relationship is influenced by having common understanding regarding the occurrence of the problems. If they manage to solve the issues together, buyers and suppliers will enable both parties to achieve the intended performance through quality and cost (Claycomb & Frankwick, 2010). Therefore, the study hypothesised that:

H_4: There is a significant relationship between jointly problem-solving and organisational performance

3. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design which allowed the researcher to collect the intended information just once over one month to determine the pattern of variables association. Through cross-sectional research, data was collected once in time (Saunders *et al.,* 2019). Regarding the nature of the study and the methodologies, a purposive sampling procedure was used to select suppliers of grapes and departments (marketing, production and purchasing departments). These departments were purposively chosen as they are familiar with the activities associated with obtaining suppliers for grapes from the surveyed organisations. However, respondents were selected through a simple random technique whereby a total sample of 100 respondents from Alko Vintages Company, Cetawiko limited and Bihawana Winery Company limited and suppliers were involved. The study was conducted in the Dodoma region at selected grapes processing factories since the grapes industry is primarily dominated by the manufacturing organisations located in the Dodoma region.

A structured questionnaire was used to collect data from 100 respondents. The rationale of using a questionnaire is on its applicability in most cross-sectional survey designs and is not time-consuming (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, primary data were collected by considering views on the subject matter to be observed. The five-point Likert scale questionnaires were used, where the respondent could select the most preferred choice for a particular statement. Variables included in this study were guided by various previous studies (Kannan and Tan 2006; Fawcett *et al.,* 2007; Hsu *et al.,* 2008; Lawson *et al.,* 2009; Rashed*et al.,* 2010; Omar *et al.,* 2010; Nazir and Shah 2014; and Munyimi 2020).Therefore, the questionnaire items captured information

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about information sharing, knowledge sharing, supply base reduction, and joint problem-solving in the first section and organisational performance in the second section. Also, the internal reliability was tested using the Cronbach alpha coefficient, which is dominant in testing the internal reliabilities among items (Santos, 1999).In this study, the Cronbach alpha of all variables' items is above 0.7, which shows that items involved in each construct were reliable and measure what was intended to be measured. Also, a pilot study was conducted before full-scale data collection from which responses obtained from the pre-testing of the questionnaire were closely checked for ambiguities and modifications were done to reflect the intention of each statement used in the development of the questionnaire. This enabled researchers to ensure the validity of data obtained in this study.

A multiple regression model was performed to analyse the relationship between buyer-supplier relationships and organisational performance. The independent variables included sharing information, sharing knowledge, reducing supplier base and joint problem solving with the dependent variable organisational performance. This model was used because both variables were treated to be continuous. Hence, the basic assumptions were tested before analysing the relationship of each independent variable to the dependent variable. As suggested by (Pallant, 2011), all the assumptions of the multiple regression were tested and showed that multicollinearity was not a problem in this study as independent variables were not correlated values of Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and tolerance statistics were below 5 and above 0.2 respectively (see table 1). Also, for testing normality, the P-P Plot of the model was observed, and the dots were significantly closer to the diagonal line, indicating the residuals are distributed. If the dots are spread away from the diagonal line, the residuals are not well distributed (Pallant, 2011). The overall multiple regression equation that was used is as follows:

$$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \varepsilon \ldots\ldots 1$$

Whereby;
Y = organisational performance
α = is the constant figure estimated in the regression model
β_1, β_2, β_3, and β_4 coefficient of independent variables showing its effect on the dependent variable
ε is the estimated error in the model.
X_1= sharing of information
X_2= sharing of knowledge
X_3= reduction of the supplier base
X_4= jointly problem-solving

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Buyer-Supplier Relationships and Organisational Performance

The findings of the multiple regression analysis model between the performance of the organisation as the dependent variable with the independent variables; sharing of information, sharing of knowledge, reduction of supplier base and jointly problem-solving are shown in Table 1.

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4.1.1 Sharing of Information and Organisational Performance

This study hypothesised that *"there is a significant relationship between sharing of information and organisational performance*. "The results in table 1 show a significant positive relationship between the sharing of information and organisational performance since the p-value is less than 5% ($p<0.05$). $\beta = 0.249$, implying that the unit change in information sharing results in a 24.9% increase in organisational performance. So, there is a significant relationship between sharing of information and organisational performance. This result is supported by the study done by Omar *et al.,* (2010), which indicated that information sharing is fundamental in a supplier-buyer relationship in the context of supply chain management. This is through sharing large quantities and quality of information on tactical and strategic operations, increasing organisational performance. Also, the findings are supported by Zhang*et al.*,(2015),who opined that sharing vital information among supply chain partners not only allows companies to achieve shared objectives but also allows supply chain processes to be coordinated.

Table 1: Buyer-supplier relationship on organisational performance

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.		
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	0.089	0.297		0.298	0.766		
Information sharing	0.233	0.079	0.249	2.947	0.004	.472	2.121
Knowledge sharing	0.342	0.071	0.372	4.790	0.000	.385	2.597
Supplier base reduction	0.077	0.089	0.078	0.861	0.392	.343	2.919
Jointly problem solving	0.282	0.076	0.311	3.692	0.000	.322	3.108

4.1.2 Sharing of Knowledge and Organisational Performance

The second hypothesis of the study stated that "*there is a significant relationship between knowledge sharing and organisational performance*." The findings in Table 1 show that the beta coefficient of sharing of knowledge was positively (0.372) related to organisational performance and significant because the p-value is less than 5% ($p <0.05$), hence it designates that the unit increases of sharing of knowledge results in 37.2% increase of organisational performance. So, the study accepted an alternate hypothesis as there is a significant relationship between sharing knowledge and organisational performance. This implies the sharing of knowledge between buyer and supplier will enable the organisation to increase performance in terms of quality achievement, cost reduction, and fast delivery of the product. The results were supported by the study which was done by Lawson *et al.,* (2009) that emphasises on buyers and suppliers to invest in the relationship for effective product development to occur; sharing product development knowledge can result in a range of advantages, including reduced prices, faster delivery, fewer production issues, early access to emerging technology and on-time product releases. Further, the study of Lawson *et al.*,(2009)opined that information exchange within the production team is

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vital to achieving benefits by collaborative problem solving between buyer and supplier, which takes advantage of the partner's knowledge and skills and improves the goods and processes.

4.1.3 Supplier Base Reduction and Organisational Performance

This study hypothesised that the reduction of supplier base is significantly related to organisational performance. The findings presented in Table 1 shows no significant relationship between the reduction of supplier base and organisational performance as the p-value is greater than 0.05. Furthermore, the coefficient of supplier base reduction was 0.078, indicating that the variable reduction of supplier base is positively related to organisational performance. However, the relationship is not statistically significant as p = 0.392, as shown in table 1. These findings were contrary to the study of Munyimi (2020), which suggests that organisations that concentrate on few suppliers by establishing a good buyer-supplier relationship and supplier Base rationalization will have a better chance of benefiting from cost reduction, delivery performance, and better quality achievement.

4.1.4 Joint Problem Solving and Organisational Performance

Lastly, this study hypothesised that joint problem solving is significantly related to organisational performance. Results in table 1 show that the beta was positively ($\beta = 0.311$) related to organisational performance and statistically significant at p-value was less than 5% ($p<0.05$). The findings were consistent with that study done by Cai *et al.,* (2009), which indicates that joint problem solving and collaborative communication is found to have direct positive effects on buyer's performance because common problem solving and mutual cooperation impact affect not only the supplier-success buyer's but also the parties' behaviours toward each other. Also, the findings were consistent with that of Claycomb and Frankwick (2010), which indicates that for collaborative relationships to succeed, it is essential that partners work together to plan. Coordinate activities and resolve problems. Planning, goal-setting, performance assessment, and problem-solving are also necessary aspects of effective collaborative relationships, and they are also linked to information sharing.

4.2 Contribution of Buyer-Supplier Relationships on Performance

Results presented in Table 2 show the contribution of independent variables of buyer-supplier relationships on the dependent variable (organisational performance). By looking at the model summary, the value of R-square was used to explain the predictive capabilities of the independent variables to the variation of the dependent variable. The value of R square in table 2is 0.614 or 61.4% which indicates that the model was good by all independent variables that including sharing of information, sharing of knowledge, reduction of supplier base and joint problem solving, are the best predictors of the dependent variable (organisational performance) as there is more than 50% variation on the dependent variable associated with independent variables included in the model. Therefore, about 61.4 percent of the variation in the

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organisational performance is expressed by the variables of buyer-supplier relationships included in this study.

Table 2: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. The error of the Estimate
1	0.784[a]	0.614	0.598	0.706

Also, the findingsin table 3 show that the model is statistically significant as the p-value is less than 5% ($p< 0.05$). Thesestatistical significances of results to determine the relationship between independent variables (IVs) and dependent variable (DV) to test the formulated hypotheses.

Table 3: ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	75.430	4	18.858	37.787	.000[b]
Residual	47.410	95	.499		
Total	122.840	99			

5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study analysed the impact of buyer-supplier relationships on organisational performance by relying on assumed applicable tools for relational governance. Findings revealed that buyer-supplier relationships in terms of (information sharing, knowledge sharing, supplier base reduction and joint problem solving) explained to a greater extent the variation on the organisational performance. Therefore, it was concluded that effective sharing of information and knowledge, supplier base reduction and joint problem solving between suppliers and buyers improve organisational performance. So, the study recommended buying organisations that included wine manufacturing firms to develop strong mechanisms that may control buyer-supplier relationships. These may be done by strengthening contracts used to engage grapes suppliers within the region and frequent training to enable farmers to produce high-quality grapes for wine production. Also, to allow grapes to farmers to deliver to the expectations of wine manufacturers, incentives provided to these farmers have to be with the required level of quality and quantity.

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