



The Mediating Role of Inventory Management in the Relationship Between Supplier Relationship and Organizational Performance: A Study on Electronics SMEs in Ambon City

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the influence of supplier relationships on organizational performance with inventory management as a mediating variable in electronic businesses in Ambon City. The research approach uses a quantitative method with a sample of 51 electronic business actors. Data collection was conducted by distributing questionnaires to business owners or managers, and data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The results show that supplier relationships have a positive and significant effect on inventory management (p-value = 0.001) and organizational performance (p-value = 0.000); inventory management also has a significant effect on organizational performance (p-value = 0.026). Further findings indicate a significant indirect effect between supplier relationships and organizational performance through inventory management (p-value = 0.030). Theoretically, these results reinforce previous findings that effective supplier relationship management and inventory control contribute to increased organizational efficiency, productivity, and profitability. This study provides practical implications for businesses in the archipelago to strengthen collaboration and trust with suppliers and develop inventory management systems that are adaptive to dynamic market needs.

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and digitalization, micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in island regions such as Ambon City face increasingly complex operational challenges (Latuconsina et al., 2024; Ralahallo et al., 2024; Waileruny & Hadinda, 2025) . In the electronics retail sector, issues such as supply uncertainty, delivery delays, and demand fluctuations increase the risk of an imbalance between stock availability and customer demand. This worsens supply chain efficiency and profitability (Alam et al., 2024) . Research by Alshahrani & Salam (2022) shows that in a business environment with geographical constraints, effective inventory management plays a crucial role in reducing logistics costs and maintaining the smooth flow of goods. This situation confirms that good inventory management is key to the operational sustainability of electronic MSMEs in Ambon.

Strong relationships between MSMEs and suppliers are the foundation for a successful, efficient supply chain. According to Joshi (2024) , supplier relationship management (SRM) based on collaboration and information sharing can improve supply reliability and lower purchasing costs. Similarly, research by Yang et al. (2022) found that long-term supplier relationships help MSMEs manage supply uncertainty and accelerate their response to market changes. However, in many MSMEs in developing regions, these relationships remain transactional rather than collaborative (Amoako-Gyampah et al., 2019) . In the context of Ambon, where most suppliers originate from outside the island, strengthening supplier relationships is not only crucial for efficiency but also for reducing the risk of distribution delays and stock shortages.

Inventory management is a crucial mechanism bridging external supplier relationships and an organization's internal performance. A study by Lee (2021) confirmed that the implementation of inventory information systems and demand planning (MRP/ERP) directly impacts supply chain efficiency and speed of customer service. In the context of SMEs, Mat et al. (2023) found that good inventory management practices, such as demand forecasting and safety stock control , improve a company's ability to cope with supply disruptions during the pandemic. Meanwhile, research by Riofiandi & Tarigan (2022) showed that inventory control mediates the effect of supplier collaboration on operational performance. These findings reinforce the assumption that the ability of Ambon's electronic SMEs to manage inventory is a connecting factor between the strength of supplier relationships and organizational performance.

Organizational performance reflects the extent to which an organization achieves efficiency and effectiveness in its operations. According to Rashid & Rasheed (2023) , operational efficiency and adaptability to market demand are key indicators of MSME success. Research by Yang & Sun (2022) also emphasizes that companies that implement supply chain integration perform better in terms of productivity, profitability, and customer satisfaction. In the context of electronic MSMEs in Ambon, improved organizational performance can be achieved through the synergy between strong supplier relationships and efficient inventory management. Thus, organizational performance is the end

result of strong coordination between supply chain actors and integrated internal management.

Most previous research has focused on the direct influence of supplier relationships on organizational performance, particularly in the manufacturing sector in large industrial areas (Baisa et al., 2025; Joshi, 2024). Few studies have explored how internal mechanisms, such as inventory management, act as a bridge between external relationships and organizational performance outcomes, particularly in the context of MSMEs in the archipelago. Research by Mat et al. (2023) suggests a potential mediating effect of inventory management, but has not examined geographic contexts with high logistical barriers. Therefore, this study will fill this gap by empirically testing the relationship between supplier relationships, inventory management, and organizational performance in electronic MSMEs in Ambon.

Based on the background and research gaps, this study aims to: (1) analyze the influence of supplier relationships on inventory management, (2) analyze the influence of supplier relationships on organizational performance, (3) test the influence of inventory management on organizational performance, and (4) identify the mediating role of inventory management in the relationship between supplier relationships and organizational performance. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich the operational management literature by clarifying the internal mechanisms that connect external factors and organizational performance. Practically, the results of this study are expected to provide strategic recommendations for electronic MSMEs in Ambon to strengthen supplier relationships and optimize inventory systems, thereby increasing operational efficiency and business competitiveness in a sustainable manner.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Supplier Relationship

The relationship between companies and suppliers has been widely discussed in supply chain management literature as a key component in improving organizational performance. Strong relationships are characterized by trust, communication, delivery reliability, and long-term commitment, enabling the efficient flow of goods and information (Benton et al., 2020; Hsu et al., 2008; Mettler & Rohner, 2009; Sued & Hussin, 2020; Thalia et al., 2024). Trust in suppliers builds the foundation for long-term relationship sustainability by minimizing monitoring costs and reducing uncertainty (Aristya & Utami, 2025). Furthermore, intensive communication strengthens coordination, increases inventory information visibility, and accelerates response to fluctuations in market demand (Yang et al., 2019).

Delivery reliability plays a role in maintaining operational continuity and preventing delays that can reduce productivity (Kumar & Rahman, 2016). Meanwhile, a long-term commitment between a company and its suppliers creates a stable relationship that allows both parties to invest in quality improvement, efficiency, and innovation (Baba et al., 2021). Overall, studies show that strong supplier relationships not only improve procurement

efficiency but also strengthen an organization's competitive position in the market (Appiah-Nimo et al., 2019) .

Inventory Management

Inventory management is the process of controlling the flow of raw materials, work-in-process, and finished goods to ensure optimal availability to meet customer demand at the lowest possible cost (Ajayi et al., 2021) . The effectiveness of this system is measured through four main indicators: stock recording accuracy, overstock and stock-out control , demand planning , and stock turnover efficiency (Gunawan & Setiawan, 2022; Hasahatan et al., 2025; Kırmızı et al., 2024) .

Research shows that accurate stock recording is a fundamental aspect that influences purchasing decisions and production planning (Mat et al., 2023) . Inaccurate stock data can lead to lost sales and high storage costs (Atnafu & Balda, 2018) . Controlling overstock and stock-outs is a crucial strategy in maintaining a balance between inventory costs and availability (Ese & Raphael, 2024) . Furthermore, the ability to conduct effective demand planning has been shown to strengthen supply chain readiness in facing demand uncertainty (Blomgren & Eriksson, 2016) . Stock turnover efficiency is also an important indicator of inventory management performance, where fast turnover reflects the efficient use of working capital (Odumusor, 2024) . Theoretically, inventory management plays a role not only as an operational function but also as a mediating mechanism that links external practices with organizational performance outcomes (Kareem, 2018; Mat et al., 2023) .

Organizational Performance

Organizational performance reflects the extent to which a company achieves its operational and strategic goals, as measured by indicators of operational efficiency, productivity, customer satisfaction, and profitability (Chileshe & Phiri, 2022; Tao et al., 2025) . Operational efficiency demonstrates an organization's ability to manage resources at minimal cost without sacrificing quality (Salah et al., 2023) . Productivity describes the level of output compared to the input used, while customer satisfaction is an indicator of a company's success in meeting market expectations (Ibrahim & Obuba, 2023) . Profitability, as a primary financial measure, indicates the end result of the efficiency and effectiveness of business processes (Salah et al., 2023) . Empirical research suggests that improving supplier relationships and inventory management directly and indirectly impacts company efficiency and profitability (Lee, 2021) . Thus, organizational performance becomes a dependent variable that reflects the successful implementation of supply chain strategies and overall operational management practices.

Based on the literature review, this study proposes three main hypotheses as follows:

H1 Supplier relationships have a positive and significant effect on inventory management .

H2 Supplier relationships have a positive and significant influence on organizational performance.

H3 Inventory management has a positive and significant effect on organizational performance.

H4 Supplier relationships have a positive and significant influence on organizational performance through the mediating variable inventory management.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

This study applies a qualitative approach with the aim of analyzing the direct influence between variables and analyzing the mediating role of inventory management in the relationship between supplier relationships and organizational performance . The research sample used was 51 electronic businesses in Ambon City. Distribution was carried out directly to the owners/persons in charge of MSMEs. The data obtained were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach, and processed using SmartPLS 3.0 software to test the measurement and structural models.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Validity and Reliability Test

Table 1. Validity and Reliability Test

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Supplier Relationship	Trust in suppliers (X1)	0.844	0.681	0.895	0.895
	Communication (X2)	0.760			
	Delivery reliability (X3)	0.777			
	Long-term commitment (X4)	0.911			
Inventory Management	Stock recording accuracy (Z1)	0.913	0.729	0.915	0.875
	Overstock & stock-out control (Z2)	0.816			
	Requirements planning (Z3)	0.850			
	Stock turnover efficiency (Z4)	0.834			
Organizational Performance	Operational efficiency (Y1)	0.879	0.760	0.927	0.895
	Productivity (Y2)	0.896			
	Customer satisfaction (Y3)	0.887			
	Profitability (Y4)	0.824			

The results of the data analysis show convergent validity as seen from the value of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) which is declared valid because it shows an overall value of ≥ 0.5 . The indicators of the three variables, namely supplier relationships, inventory management, and organizational performance used to measure these variables, have good convergent validity with an overall Outer loading value showing a value of > 0.7 . The Composite Reliability and Cronbach's Alpha values show a value of > 0.7 , these results indicate good reliability. This means that the measurement of each variable in this study was carried out consistently and can be relied upon for further testing. The consistency between the results of the validity and reliability tests strengthens empirical evidence that the measurement instrument has met adequate statistical requirements. Thus, the measurement model (outer model) can be declared feasible to continue to the structural model testing stage to analyze the relationship between latent variables in this study (Hair et al., 2017).

Hypothesis Testing Analysis

Table 2. Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis	Latent Variable	Original Sample	P-Value	Hypothesis
H1	Supplier Relationship →Inventory Management	0.560	0.001	Accepted
H2	Supplier Relationship →Organizational Performance	0.924	0,000	Accepted
H3	Inventory Management →Organizational Performance	0.393	0.026	Accepted
H4	Supplier Relationship →Inventory Management →Organizational Performance	0.363	0.030	Accepted

Based on the results of the data analysis in Table 2, it can be explained that the direct relationship between Supplier Relationships and Inventory Management with a p-value of 0.001 or <0.05 indicates a significant effect, and the original sample value is 0.560, indicating a positive relationship between these two variables, so that hypothesis 1 is accepted. These results are in line with the findings of Domemek et al. (2022) who stated that the quality of relationships with suppliers, especially in aspects of trust, communication, and delivery reliability, plays a crucial role in increasing the effectiveness of inventory management. Good relationships with suppliers enable companies to obtain real-time supply information, thus optimizing stock requirement planning and reducing the risk of stock-outs and overstocks. (Hasahatan et al., 2025). Thus, the stronger the relationship between MSMEs and suppliers, the better the performance of their inventory management system.

Furthermore, the direct relationship between Supplier Relationships and Organizational Performance with a p-value of 0.000 or <0.05 indicates a significant influence, and the original sample value is 0.924, indicating a positive relationship between these two variables, so that hypothesis 2 is accepted. This finding supports the research results of Yang et al. (2022) who

stated that collaboration and integration with suppliers directly improve organizational performance through operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. In the context of MSMEs, the ability to establish long-term relationships with suppliers can reduce supply uncertainty and accelerate responses to market demand (Joshi, 2024). This has an impact on increasing the productivity and profitability of the organization as a whole.

Likewise, the direct relationship between Inventory Management and Organizational Performance, with a p-value of 0.026 or <0.05 , indicates a significant effect. The original sample value of 0.393 indicates a positive relationship between the two variables, thus accepting Hypothesis 3. These results are consistent with research by Lee (2021) and Ese & Raphael (2024), which states that effective inventory management practices, particularly in terms of accurate stock recording, demand planning, and efficient stock turnover, can improve operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. In the context of MSMEs, inventory efficiency not only reduces operational costs but also strengthens business competitiveness in the local market (Alam et al., 2024). Therefore, good inventory management plays a key role in improving organizational performance.

Meanwhile, the indirect relationship between Supplier Relationships and Organizational Performance mediated by Inventory Management with a p-value of 0.030 or <0.05 indicates a significant mediation effect, and the original sample value is 0.363 which indicates a positive relationship in this mediation effect so that hypothesis 4 is accepted. This finding strengthens the research results of Mat et al. (2023) and Lee (2021) which explain that inventory management functions as an internal mechanism that connects external relationships (such as supplier collaboration) with organizational performance results. Strong relationships with suppliers create better information flow and coordination, which ultimately increases the effectiveness of inventory management and contributes positively to overall organizational performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study indicate that supplier relationships, inventory management, and organizational performance have a mutually reinforcing relationship in the context of electronic MSMEs in Ambon City. Good relationships with suppliers have been shown to significantly influence the effectiveness of inventory management and improve organizational performance. This confirms that trust, communication, delivery reliability, and long-term commitment are important factors in building operational stability for MSMEs operating in archipelagic regions with high logistical challenges. Thus, this study strengthens the view that strong external relationships can be a strategic resource that enhances an organization's competitive advantage.

Furthermore, inventory management has been shown to play a significant role as a mediating variable linking supplier relationships with organizational performance. These results demonstrate that efficient inventory management is an internal mechanism capable of translating the quality of

external relationships into tangible operational outcomes. By paying attention to accurate inventory records, controlling stock-outs and overstocks , and properly planning needs, MSMEs can achieve higher operational efficiency and profitability.

Based on these results, it is recommended that electronic MSMEs in Ambon City strengthen strategic partnerships with suppliers through open communication, long-term agreements, and the use of information technology in supply chain management. The local government and MSME support institutions also need to facilitate training and digitize inventory management systems to improve logistics efficiency in the archipelago. Academically, this research opens up opportunities for further research to explore other factors such as digital supply chain integration or technological capability as variables that can strengthen the relationship between suppliers and organizational performance across different geographic and industry contexts.

FURTHER STUDY

This study is limited by its geographic context, focusing on electronic MSMEs in Ambon City. Therefore, generalizability of the results is still limited to island regions with similar logistical characteristics. Therefore, further research is recommended to expand the scope of research locations to other regions in eastern Indonesia, in order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between supplier relationships , inventory management , and organizational performance in various business environments.

Furthermore, future research could consider adding other moderating or mediating variables, such as technological capability , digital transformation , or supply chain integration , which could potentially strengthen the relationship between the main variables. Integrating digitalization and technological innovation will provide new perspectives on how MSMEs can optimize supplier relationships and improve inventory management efficiency in the era of digital transformation.

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