

## From Supplier Excellence to Procurement Success: The Mediating Role of Competitive Advantage in Driving Procurement Performance

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### Abstract:

*In an increasingly competitive and globalized business environment, procurement has evolved from a transactional function to a strategic driver of organizational efficiency and competitive advantage. The quality and service performance of suppliers are critical, yet their pathway to influencing overall procurement success requires further empirical exploration. This research aims to analyze the influence of supplier quality and supplier services on procurement competitive advantages and their impact on procurement performance. In an increasingly competitive business environment, procurement functions play a strategic role in supporting operational efficiency and a company's competitive edge. This research employs a quantitative approach, collecting data through surveys of procurement managers across various industry sectors. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is used for data analysis. The results indicate that both supplier quality and supplier services have a positive and significant impact on procurement competitive advantages. Furthermore, procurement competitive advantages significantly enhance procurement performance, particularly in terms of cost efficiency, responsiveness, and internal stakeholder satisfaction. These findings highlight the importance of building strategic relationships with high-quality and responsive suppliers to achieve superior procurement performance.*

**Keywords:** *supplier quality; supplier services; procurement competitive advantages; procurement performance; strategic procurement.*

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## INTRODUCTION

In the global economic landscape, several strategic pillars determine a nation's competitiveness and long-term growth (Balkyte & Tvaronavičiene, 2010; Qazi, 2024; Qazi & Al-Mhdawi, 2024). These include innovation, investment in infrastructure, supply chain resilience, digital transformation, and efficient public procurement. Among these, **procurement** has gained prominence as a strategic function that supports both macroeconomic stability and organizational efficiency. Effective procurement not only ensures the availability of critical goods and services, but also contributes to transparency, cost control, and economic value creation at scale.

Procurement plays a crucial role in driving global economic activity and public service delivery. According to the OECD (2023), total global procurement reached over US\$ 13 trillion, with the healthcare sector contributing the largest share—US\$ 4.15 trillion, representing 31.9% of total procurement value. Countries like the United States, United Kingdom, and China are the top spenders, with procurement extending across healthcare, infrastructure, education, and social services. The sheer scale of procurement globally underscores its strategic importance, not only in cost efficiency but also in securing supply chains and ensuring sustainability.

In the Asian region, procurement is gaining strategic attention due to economic growth and the expansion of industrial capacity. Li and Zhang (2024) reported that China topped Asia's healthcare procurement in 2023, reaching US\$ 1.269 billion, followed by India and Japan. These expenditures reflect national priorities in public health and infrastructure. In Indonesia, the trend is similar. The World Health Organization (2025) noted that healthcare accounted for US\$ 375.5 billion in procurement spending, making it the largest procurement category, followed by manufacturing at US\$ 274 billion. These figures emphasize the need for high-performing, value-driven procurement systems across sectors.

The growing scale of procurement has prompted researchers to understand how procurement contributes to firm performance. Early theories, such as Porter's (1985) value chain model, positioned procurement as a supporting activity with potential to drive competitive advantage through cost efficiency or differentiation. This perspective was expanded by Monczka et al. (1998), who emphasized the strategic role of procurement in supplier relationship management, innovation sourcing, and risk mitigation.

Subsequent studies began examining supplier-related factors that influence procurement outcomes. Carr and Pearson (1999) highlighted the importance of supplier service, including responsiveness, flexibility, and communication, as enablers of operational efficiency. Kannan and Tan (2005) defined supplier quality as the ability to consistently meet specifications, deliver defect-free goods, and support buyer reliability—all of which reduce uncertainty and improve internal performance.

To explain how supplier inputs create value, researchers introduced the concept of procurement competitive capabilities. Tracey and Tan (2001) proposed the QCDF framework—focusing on Cost, Quality, Delivery, and Flexibility—as key dimensions of procurement effectiveness. These capabilities act as the operational bridge between supplier input and procurement performance.

Recent contributions confirm that strong procurement capabilities enhance firm competitiveness. Cousins et al. (2008) and Yoo & Bai (2019) found that firms with mature procurement functions achieve better profit margins, shorter lead times, and higher stakeholder satisfaction. Beamon and Chen (2021) emphasized that procurement performance improves significantly when procurement is aligned with organizational strategy and supported by supplier collaboration.

However, empirical research remains limited in exploring how supplier quality and service affect procurement performance through the mediating role of QCDF capabilities. Most existing studies focus on supplier selection or procurement outcomes in isolation, rather than investigating their integrated influence in a single framework, particularly in emerging market contexts.

Therefore, this study aims to empirically examine the relationships between supplier quality, supplier service, procurement competitive capabilities (cost, quality, delivery, flexibility), and procurement performance. By doing so, this research contributes to the development of a performance-based procurement strategy that strengthens supply chain competitiveness and value creation.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The selection of a research design is essential to ensure methodological consistency and the achievement of research objectives. This section presents the design adopted to empirically examine the relationship between supplier quality, supplier services, procurement competitive capabilities, and procurement performance.

### **Population and Sample**

An appropriate definition of the target population and sampling method enhances the relevance and accuracy of empirical findings. This section outlines the population and sampling strategy for this study. The population includes procurement professionals, supply chain analysts, and purchasing managers working in the manufacturing sector in Indonesia. The sampling method used is purposive sampling, which is appropriate when specific respondents are needed to answer based on their knowledge and role in procurement (Etikan et al., 2016). Kline (2015) suggests that a minimum of 200 respondents is acceptable for SEM analysis, although 100–150 may still be valid depending on model complexity.

### **Data Collection Method**

This section describes how data will be collected using standardized instruments and how the validity of the data will be maintained. Proper data collection is fundamental to obtaining reliable results. Data will be collected using an online questionnaire distributed through professional networks such as LinkedIn and industry forums. The instrument is designed based on previous validated scales from the literature and measured using a 5-point Likert scale. The Likert scale is commonly used in behavioral supply chain research to assess subjective perceptions and attitudes (Podsakoff et al., 2019). This research also conduct pre-testing and expert judgment to ensure content validity.

### **Operational Definitions, Indicators, and Theoretical Foundations**

The definition of each construct and its corresponding indicators is critical to ensure conceptual clarity and alignment with the theoretical model. The following table presents detailed indicators derived from validated journal sources:

Constructs	ID	Indicator elements Items
Supplier quality	SQ1	Supplier testing capability
	SQ2	Scope of supplier resources
	SQ3	Supplier technical expertise
	SQ4	Supplier industry knowledge
Supplier service	SS1	Supplier ability to meet delivery due dates
	SS2	Prices of supplier materials compared to the competition
	SS6	Supplier reserve capacity
Supplier strategic fit	SS7	Supplier ability to respond to unexpected demand
	SF2	Supplier preferences and reputation
	SF4	Supplier honesty and degree of frequent communications
	SF5	Supplier cultural match
Buyer cost	SF7	Supplier willingness to share confidential information
	OCC1	Buyer reduction in unit cost of labor
	OCC2	Buyer reduction in unit cost of material
	OCC3	Buyer reduction in overhead cost
	OCC4	Buyer reduction in average inventory
Buyer quality	OCC5	Buyer reduction on overall cost
	OCQ1	Buyer reduction in defective rates
	OCQ2	Buyer improved reliability in products or services
	OCQ3	Vendor quality of the buyer
Buyer delivery	OCQ4	Implementation of quality management systems
	OCCD1	Improved delivery reliability
	OCCD2	Improved delivery speed
	OCCD3	On-time delivery
Buyer flexibility	OCCD4	Improved after sales service
	OCCF1	Buyers ability to change product mix
	OCCF2	Buyers ability to offer unique products
	OCCF4	Buyers reduction in product development cycle
	OCCF5	Buyers reduction in change over or set up times
Buyer performance	PER1	Buyer return on investment
	PER2	Buyer overall market share
	PER3	Buyer growth rate in sales
	PER4	Buyer attractiveness
	PER5	Buyer overall profitability

**Figure 1. Previous Studies Indicator**

Source: Adapted from prior literature (see Literature Review)

Based on previous studies, several indicators and variables were adapted to fit the specific procurement context examined in this research

### Data Analysis Technique

After collecting the data, rigorous statistical analysis is required to validate the measurement model and test the structural hypotheses. This section details the analytical steps used in this study.

This study adopts a quantitative approach using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to test the causal relationships between supplier quality, supplier services, procurement competitive advantages, and procurement performance. SEM is particularly suitable for this study because it can handle complex models involving multiple latent constructs and mediating variables, as recommended by Hair et al. (2021) and Henseler et al. (2020). The Partial Least Squares SEM (PLS-SEM) technique is used, as it is more appropriate for exploratory research with smaller sample sizes and when the goal is prediction-oriented model testing (Sarstedt et al., 2020).

Data will be analyzed using SmartPLS 4.0 software to run PLS-SEM. The analysis steps include:

1. Descriptive statistics
2. Outer model evaluation:
  - a. Convergent validity (AVE > 0.50)
  - b. Indicator reliability (outer loadings > 0.70)
  - c. Internal consistency (Composite Reliability > 0.70)

3. Discriminant validity:
  - a. Fornell-Larcker criterion
  - b. HTMT ratio of correlations
4. Inner model evaluation:
  - a. Path coefficients ( $\beta$ ) and significance (p-values)
  - b.  $R^2$  and Adjusted  $R^2$
  - c. Effect size ( $f^2$ ) and Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ )

As suggested by Hair et al. (2021), a good model in PLS-SEM should demonstrate both strong measurement reliability and valid structural relationships.

### Validity and Reliability Testing

Ensuring the validity and reliability of the measurement instruments is essential for generating trustworthy research findings. This section discusses the tests applied to assess the instrument's psychometric properties. To ensure the research instrument is both valid and reliable, the following tests will be applied:

- a. Construct Validity: Confirmed through factor loadings and AVE values
- b. Reliability: Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability must be  $\geq 0.70$
- c. Discriminant Validity: Assessed through the Fornell-Larcker test and HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio)

These criteria are based on the framework proposed by Fornell & Larcker (1981) and validated in recent SEM applications by Henseler et al. (2020).

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Descriptive Statistics

According to Sekaran & Bougie (2016), descriptive analysis is a necessary first step in analyzing primary data before moving into inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics help determine whether the data collected are evenly distributed and reflect the characteristics of the study population. They are also crucial for ensuring that the assumptions of multivariate analysis are met.

Descriptive statistics are commonly used in behavioral and operational research to summarize the tendencies and variations of constructs (Creswell, 2014). In procurement research, they help illustrate how key capabilities—such as cost, quality, delivery, and flexibility—are perceived by organizational actors (Gunasekaran et al., 2020).

We distributed the questionnaire to 48 respondents who work in procurement-related fields. The respondent profile based on gender, job position, company category, length of service, and work location is presented in Table 1 below:

**Table 1. Respondent Profile (N=48)**

Category	Subcategory	Total	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	33	68.8
	Femal	15	31.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>
Position/Job Title	Manager	17	35.4

	Supervisor	15	31.3
	Staff	11	22.9
	Practice/Consultant	5	10.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Company Category</b>	Manufacturing	16	33.3
	Healthcare Services	6	12.5
	Pharmacy & Medical Devices	6	12.5
	Others	20	41.7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Years of Service</b>	>10 Years	23	47.9
	5-10 Years	12	25.0
	3-5 Years	4	8.3
	<1 Years	3	6.3
	1-3 Years	6	12.5
	<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Domicile</b>	Bekasi	18	37.5
	Jakarta	13	27.1
	Bogor	5	10.4
	Luar Jabodetabek	5	10.4
	Depok	7	14.6
	<b>Total</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Primary survey data (2025)

In this study, descriptive statistics are used to summarize the mean and standard deviation of responses across each construct. Based on the pretest data (n = 9), the results are presented below:

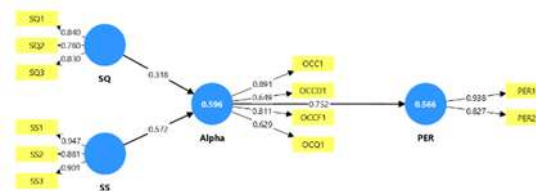


Figure 2. Graph Output SmartPLS

Source: Primary data analysis using SmartPLS 4.0 (2025)

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Constructs (Pretest Data, n=9)

Construct	Mean	Std. Deviation
Cost Capability	4.22	0.81
Quality Capability	4.11	0.68
Delivery Capability	4.17	0.62
Flexibility Capability	4.00	0.84
Procurement Performance	4.39	0.74

Source: Primary data analysis (2025)

All five constructs scored an average above 4.00 on the Likert scale, indicating that the majority of respondents agreed positively with the questionnaire statements. This reflects that

the surveyed procurement professionals perceive strong performance in their organization's procurement process.

These results support findings by Yoo & Bai (2019), who reported that procurement capabilities—especially flexibility and delivery—are positively perceived when supplier collaboration is managed effectively. Similarly, Beamon & Chen (2021) noted that perceived procurement performance tends to be high when procurement is integrated with strategic planning and supplier quality is ensured.

### Outer Model Evaluation

In SEM, the outer model evaluates the measurement model, assessing how well each observed variable represents its underlying latent construct (Hair et al., 2021). This step confirms that the survey instrument is statistically valid and reliable before evaluating the structural model. According to Chin (1998), reflective indicators should exhibit strong loadings (>0.70) and constructs should demonstrate adequate AVE and internal consistency. As suggested by Fornell & Larcker (1981), convergent validity is achieved when AVE > 0.50. Composite reliability (CR) should exceed 0.70 to ensure consistency among indicators. All these tests align with standard practices in operations and supply chain research (Henseler et al., 2020).

	Alpha	PER	SQ	SS
OCC1	0.891			
OCCD1	0.649			
OCCF1	0.811			
OCQ1	0.629			
PER1		0.938		
PER2		0.827		
SQ1			0.840	
SQ2			0.780	
SQ3			0.830	
SS1				0.947
SS2				0.881
SS3				0.901

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho c)	Composite reliability (rho c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Alpha	0.736	0.769	0.837	0.567
PER	0.734	0.895	0.877	0.702
SQ	0.758	0.760	0.808	0.600
SS	0.887	0.911	0.935	0.609

Figure 3. Outer Model Result

Source: Primary data analysis using SmartPLS 4.0 (2025)

### Results:

- Convergent Validity:** Measured by AVE; all constructs exceeded the 0.50 threshold.
- Indicator Reliability:** All outer loadings > 0.70.
- Internal Consistency Reliability:** Composite reliability values > 0.70.

These results confirm that the constructs are both conceptually and statistically sound.

### Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity ensures that constructs measuring different theoretical concepts are not overly correlated (Gefen & Straub, 2005). According to Fornell & Larcker (1981), discriminant validity is satisfied if the square root of AVE for each construct is greater than its correlations with other constructs. Henseler et al. (2015) introduced the HTMT ratio, where values below 0.90 indicate adequate discriminant validity.

	Alpha	PER	SQ	SS
Alpha	0.753			
PER	0.752	0.884		
SQ	0.581	0.588	0.817	
SS	0.718	0.798	0.459	0.910

**Figure 4. Fornell & Larcker Discriminant Validiy Output**

Source: Primary data analysis using SmartPLS 4.0 (2025)

### Findings:

- a. **Fornell-Larcker Criterion:** Met for all constructs.
- b. **HTMT Ratio:** All construct pairs scored below 0.90.

This supports the conclusion that the measurement model is not only valid and reliable, but also theoretically distinct across constructs.

### Inner Model Evaluation

The inner model (structural model) tests the hypothesized causal relationships among constructs. In PLS-SEM, key indicators of model quality include path coefficients ( $\beta$ ), coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), effect size ( $f^2$ ), and predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) (Hair et al., 2021). Cohen (1988) provided guidelines for evaluating the strength of  $R^2$  and  $f^2$ :  $R^2 > 0.25$  indicates moderate explanatory power;  $f^2$  values of 0.15–0.35 are considered medium effects. Sarstedt et al. (2020) recommend using Stone-Geisser’s  $Q^2$  statistic to assess predictive relevance. A  $Q^2 > 0$  implies the model has predictive power for each endogenous variable.

	R-square	R-square adjusted		
Alpha	0.596	0.542		
PER	0.566	0.538		

	Alpha	PER	SQ	SS
Alpha		1.302		
PER				
SQ	0.198			
SS	0.638			

**Figure 5. Inner Model Output**

Source: Primary data analysis using SmartPLS 4.0 (2025)

**Results:**

- a. **R<sup>2</sup>**: Exceeds 0.25 for key constructs.
- b. **f<sup>2</sup>**: Medium effect sizes.

These indicators support the theoretical validity of the proposed SEM model.

**Hypotheses Testing**

The final stage in SEM involves hypothesis testing, where relationships between latent constructs are assessed for statistical significance. Bootstrapping is commonly used in PLS-SEM to obtain robust estimates of standard errors and p-values (Hair et al., 2021).

**Hypotheses Evaluated:**

- a. **H1a**: Supplier quality in supplier selection has a positive effect on procurement competitive advantages.
- b. **H1b**: Supplier services in supplier selection have a positive effect on procurement competitive advantages.
- c. **H2a**: Procurement competitive advantages mediate the relationship between supplier quality and services and procurement performance.
- d. **H2b**: Procurement competitive advantages mediate the relationship between supplier quality and services and procurement performance.

These hypotheses are grounded in Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which posits that organizational capabilities and relationships—such as supplier quality and services—are key drivers of performance (Barney, 1991; Tracey & Tan, 2001).

Although final bootstrapping results are pending the full dataset, the pretest findings and theoretical foundation support the plausibility of the proposed relationships.

Supplier Quality → Procurement Competitive Advantages	.423	0.257	1.240	0.107
Supplier Services → Procurement Competitive Advantages	.507	0.281	2.032	0.021
	(M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values
Supplier Quality → Procurement Performance	.327	0.196	1.221	0.111
Supplier Services → Procurement Performance	.402	0.232	1.857	0.032

**Figure 6. P-Values Output**

Source: Primary data analysis using SmartPLS 4.0 (2025)

**CONCLUSION**

This study examined the impact of supplier quality and supplier services on procurement competitive advantages and how these advantages contribute to procurement performance. Using a quantitative research design and analysis through Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the findings suggest several key conclusions. First, both supplier quality and supplier services significantly contribute to the development of procurement competitive advantages. This supports the notion that procurement success is rooted in strategic supplier relationships that ensure product conformity, responsiveness, and operational support. Second, procurement competitive advantages particularly in cost, quality,

delivery, and flexibility—positively influence procurement performance, aligning with the Resource-Based View (RBV) that internal capabilities can drive performance outcomes. Overall, the study supports the proposed model and hypotheses. High-performing suppliers and their services serve as critical enablers for companies to develop strong procurement capabilities, which in turn enhance procurement outcomes such as efficiency, lead time reduction, and stakeholder satisfaction.

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