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Building Superior Supplier Performance: The Mediating Role of Supplier Satisfaction in the Influence of Client Trust, Contractual Justice, and Payment Reliability

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Abstract: The Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) industry in the energy sector is highly dependent on supplier performance. However, PT Torishima Services Indonesia (TSI) faces a supplier performance gap, with actual achievements reaching only 84.75% against a >95% target. This study aims to examine and analyze the influence of Client Trust, Contractual Justice, and Payment Reliability on Supplier Performance, with Supplier Satisfaction acting as a mediating variable. A quantitative explanatory survey method was employed, collecting data from a sample of 128 active suppliers of PT TSI, which was subsequently analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM PLS).Quantitative results demonstrate that client trust ($\beta = 0.091$, $p < 0.05$), contractual justice ($\beta = 0.173$, $p < 0.05$), and payment reliability ($\beta = 0.133$, $p < 0.05$) have a direct, positive, and significant effect on supplier performance. These independent variables also strongly predict supplier satisfaction, with contractual justice emerging as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.375$, $p < 0.05$), followed by trust ($\beta = 0.340$, $p < 0.05$) and payment ($\beta = 0.296$, $p < 0.05$). Supplier satisfaction itself exerts a dominant positive influence on performance ($\beta = 0.614$, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, mediation testing confirms that supplier satisfaction significantly mediates the effects of client trust ($\beta = 0.209$, $p < 0.05$), contractual justice ($\beta = 0.230$, $p < 0.05$), and payment reliability ($\beta = 0.182$, $p < 0.05$) on supplier performance. Theoretically, this study contributes to reinforcing relational governance and supplier relationship management theories by proposing a comprehensive causal model. Practically, management is recommended to implement transparent contractual fairness principles and simplify payment administration procedures to drive sustainable supplier satisfaction and performance. This research offers novelty by simultaneously integrating relational, structural, and financial governance dimensions into a single comprehensive mediation framework within the specific, high risk context of the energy MRO industry, which has not been previously explored.

Keywords: Client Trust, Contractual Justice, Payment Reliability, Supplier Satisfaction, Supplier Performance.

INTRODUCTION

The logistics and supply chain ecosystem within the energy sector is characterized by high risk, stringent precision requirements, and a heavy reliance on external partners. In the Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) industry, supplier performance is not merely a support function but a strategic asset. PT Torishima Services Indonesia (TSI), a key player in this sector, relies on a network of 188 suppliers to deliver critical services. However, despite the strategic importance of these partnerships, TSI faces operational challenges. Data from 2025 indicates a supplier success rate of only 84.75%, falling short of the >95% target, accompanied by high complaint rates (52.84%) regarding dissatisfaction, client distrust, unfair contracts, and payment delays. This phenomenon indicates that the performance gap is fundamentally a crisis of relational and structural governance rather than mere technical failure.

To address these challenges, it is essential to examine the determinants of supplier outcomes. Within the relational domain, client trust is a fundamental driver of relationship quality. Defined as the expectation that a client will act with integrity and without opportunism, trust reduces uncertainty. Ganguly & Roy (2021), Liu & Jia (2022), Awatara, Indiani, & Wahyuni (2025), Hudnurkar & Ambekar (2025), and Sun, Zhu, & Yang (2021) established that client trust significantly boosts supplier satisfaction. Regarding performance, Setiawan & Tarigan (2024), Azhra & Satyanegara (2025), Dwiastuti & Satyanegara (2024), and Basri & Silfi (2025) found that trust positively impacts supplier performance. However, critical inconsistencies exist; Ariesty (2023) found that client trust had no significant effect on supplier performance, creating a gap that requires further investigation. Therefore, this study proposes:
H1: Client Trust has a positive and significant influence on Supplier Satisfaction.
H2: Client Trust has a positive and significant influence on Supplier Performance.

In the domain of structural and institutional governance, contractual justice the perceived fairness in the distribution of rights, obligations, and procedures plays a crucial role. Research by Carter, Wagner et al. (2025), Bhattacharya, Shi, Hudnurkar, & Ambekar (2024), and Weller, Zunk, & Pulles (2021) confirms that contractual justice significantly influences supplier satisfaction. In terms of performance, Chowdhury (2025) and Lee, Roden, & Son (2025) demonstrated that contractual justice also has a positive impact on supplier performance.
H3: Contractual Justice has a positive and significant influence on Supplier Satisfaction.
H4: Contractual Justice has a positive and significant influence on Supplier Performance.

Similarly, financial governance through payment reliability reflects the consistency and transparency of the client's financial obligations. According to Awatara (2023), Andriani, Arso, & Raharjo (2023), Mauni (2023), and Amarasekara & Marsinghe (2024), payment reliability has a significant positive influence on supplier satisfaction. Furthermore, regarding operational output, Awatara, Indiani, & Wahyuni (2025), Kilay, Simamora, & Putra (2022), Jean (2024), Amberg, Jacobson, & Qi (2024), and Qian, Dion, Wagner, & Seuring (2023) have proven that payment reliability positively affects supplier performance.
H5: Payment Reliability has a positive and significant influence on Supplier Satisfaction.
H6: Payment Reliability has a positive and significant influence on Supplier Performance.

To connect these governance practices to actual performance, supplier satisfaction acts as a catalyst for better output. According to Ahmed, Asim, & Manzoor (2020), Wu, Hodges, & Su (2022), Ariesty (2024), Wijaya, Rachmat, & Siregar (2023), and Syifa & Nurhasanah (2023), there is a strong positive influence of supplier satisfaction on supplier performance.
H7: Supplier Satisfaction has a positive and significant influence on Supplier Performance.

Despite these valuable studies, the exact psychological and relational mechanism through which these governance structures translate into actual supplier performance remains underexplored. Drawing upon Relational Governance Theory and Social Exchange Theory, this study argues that the relationship between client trust and supplier performance is deeply rooted in the psychological state of the supplier. Trust acts as a relational lubricant that translates satisfaction into superior operational output (Mangra & Yadav, 2024). Furthermore, contractual justice serves as the structural backbone of a healthy buyer supplier relationship. Malik, Hamid, & Wahab (2024) argue that heightened satisfaction serves as a mechanism that transforms perceptions of fairness into tangible performance outcomes. Finally, consistent and transparent payment practices significantly boost supplier satisfaction by alleviating financial stress, making satisfaction a vital bridge that converts financial reliability into sustained high performance (Chowdhury, Bhattacharya, & Koushan, 2025).

H8: Client Trust influences Supplier Performance through Supplier Satisfaction.
H9: Contractual Justice influences Supplier Performance through Supplier Satisfaction.
H10: Payment Reliability influences Supplier Performance through Supplier Satisfaction.

Addressing these gaps, this study proposes an integrative model to resolve the inconsistencies in previous findings (particularly regarding the direct impact of trust on performance) and to test the mediating role of satisfaction. The Novelty of this research lies in: (1) The simultaneous testing of Client Trust, Contractual Justice, and Payment Reliability on Performance via Satisfaction, which has not been comprehensively analyzed in a single model before; (2) The specific context of the high risk MRO industry at PT TSI, a location never previously researched; and (3) The use of specific indicators relevant to MRO operational challenges. Therefore, the main objective of this study is to examine and analyze the direct and indirect influences of Client Trust, Contractual Justice, and Payment Reliability on Supplier Performance, mediated by Supplier Satisfaction.

METHODS

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative approach utilizing both descriptive and verificatory (confirmatory) methods to investigate the causal relationships between variables. The descriptive method is used to map the current state of variables, while the verificatory method aims to test and confirm the proposed hypotheses grounded in the relational governance theory. The research was conducted at PT Torishima Services Indonesia (TSI), focusing on its supply chain network, over a six month period from July to December 2025.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consists of 188 active suppliers of PT TSI, categorized into various business fields such as Spare Parts, Fabrication, and Mechanical Services. To ensure representative data, the study employed a Stratified Random Sampling technique. The sample size was calculated using the Slovin formula with a precision level of 5% (d = 0.05). Based on the calculation, a sample of 128 respondents was determined.

Data Analysis

Data collection was carried out using a structured questionnaire with a 5 point Likert scale. The collected data were analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) based on variance, utilizing SmartPLS 3.0 software. The analysis procedure consisted of:

1. Measurement Model (Outer Model) Evaluation: Assessing validity (Outer Loading > 0.700) and reliability (Cronbach's Alpha & Composite Reliability > 0.700, AVE > 0.500).

2. Structural Model (Inner Model) Evaluation: Testing hypotheses via Path Coefficients, T Statistics (> 1.65), and P Values (< 0.05), as well as evaluating the model's predictive power (R2).

Based on the hypotheses developed in the introduction, the conceptual framework tested in this study is presented in Figure 1 below.

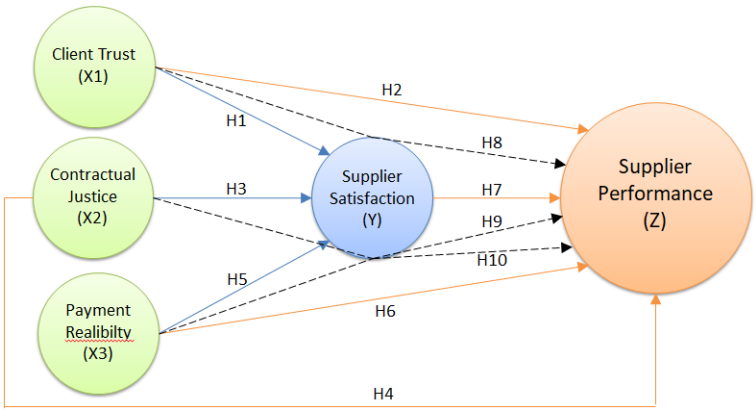


Figure 1. Research Model

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Validity Test

The validity of the measurement model was assessed using Outer Loadings. An indicator is considered valid if its loading factor exceeds 0.700. The results of the validity test are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Validity Test Results

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading Range	Standard	Decision
Client Trust (X1)	CT1 - CT5	0.861 – 0.932	> 0.700	Valid
Contractual Justice (X2)	CJ1 - CJ5	0.934 – 0.964	> 0.700	Valid
Payment Reliability (X3)	PR1 - PR5	0.898 – 0.973	> 0.700	Valid
Supplier Satisfaction (Y)	SS1 - SS5	0.933 – 0.961	> 0.700	Valid

Source: Data Processed from SmartPLS Algorithm (2025)

Based on Table 1, all indicators for Client Trust, Contractual Justice, Payment Reliability, Supplier Satisfaction, and Supplier Performance have outer loading values greater than 0.700. Analytically, this strong outer loading indicates that the measurement instruments accurately captured the specific operational realities of the 128 MRO suppliers at PT TSI. The respondents possessed a clear, shared understanding of the governance constructs, confirming that the questionnaire effectively mapped the relational and structural dynamics occurring in the field.

Reliability Test

Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, Rho_A, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	AVE	Decision
Client Trust	0.944	0.946	0.957	0.818	Reliable
Contractual Justice	0.970	0.971	0.977	0.894	Reliable
Payment Reliability	0.968	0.969	0.975	0.886	Reliable
Supplier Satisfaction	0.967	0.969	0.974	0.883	Reliable
Supplier Performance	0.965	0.965	0.973	0.878	Reliable

Source: Data Processed from SmartPLS Algorithm (2025)

Table 2 shows that all variables have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values > 0.700, and AVE values > 0.500. This indicates that the measurement model has excellent internal consistency and convergent validity. From an analytical perspective, this high reliability proves that the suppliers' evaluations of PT TSI's governance practices and their own performance are highly stable. Such consistency ensures that the subsequent structural model testing is built upon a robust empirical foundation, rather than random perceptive bias.

Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing (Direct Effects)

The structural model assessment was conducted to test the proposed hypotheses. The Path Coefficients and T Statistics obtained from the bootstrapping procedure are visualized in Figure 2 and detailed in Table 3.

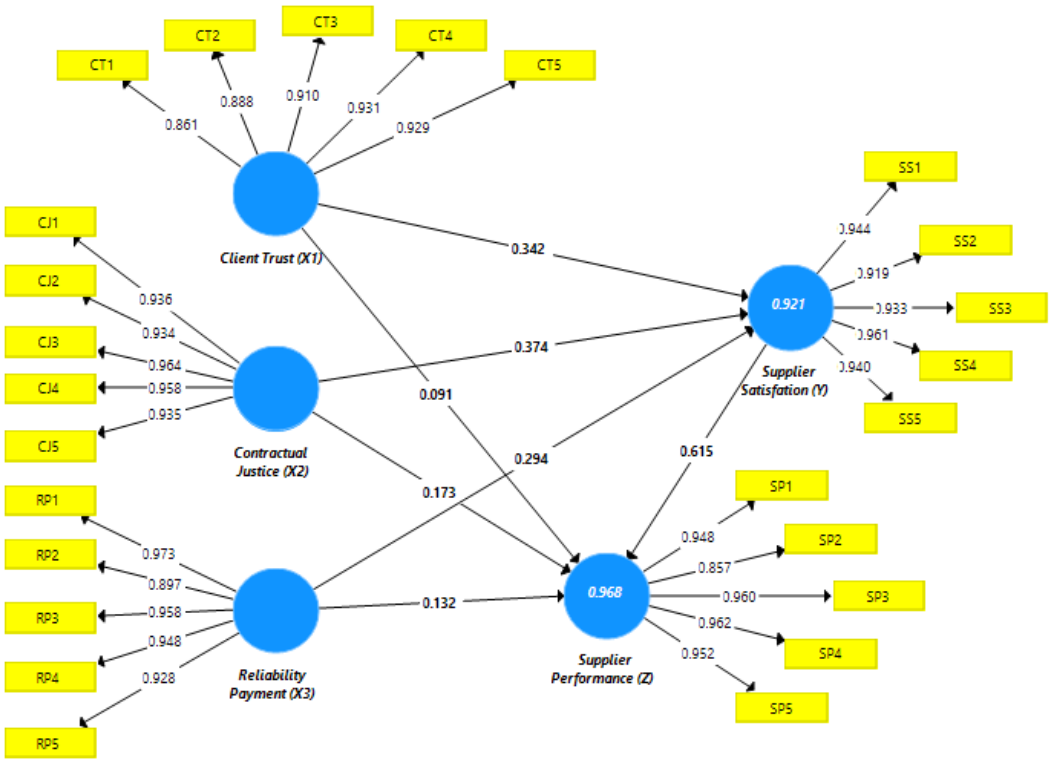


Figure 2. Structural Model Results (Bootstrapping)

Table 3. Hypothesis Test Results (Direct Effects)

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P Values	Result
H1	Client Trust → Supplier Satisfaction	0.340	7366	0.000	Accepted
H2	Client Trust → Supplier Performance	0.091	2130	0.034	Accepted
H3	Contractual Justice → Supplier Satisfaction	0.375	4962	0.000	Accepted
H4	Contractual Justice → Supplier Performance	0.173	2337	0.020	Accepted
H5	Payment Reliability → Supplier Satisfaction	0.296	3627	0.000	Accepted
H6	Payment Reliability → Supplier Performance	0.133	2858	0.004	Accepted
H7	Supplier Satisfaction → Supplier Performance	0.614	5026	0.000	Accepted

Source: Data Processed from SmartPLS Bootstrapping (2025)

As shown in Table 3, all direct paths have T Statistics > 1.65 (for one tailed) and P Values < 0.05, confirming that Client Trust, Contractual Justice, and Payment Reliability significantly influence both Supplier Satisfaction and Supplier Performance.

Analytical Interpretation of Direct Effects

Rather than merely exhibiting statistical significance, the path coefficients reveal the varying degrees of impact each governance mechanism holds within the MRO supply chain:

1. Drivers of Satisfaction (H1, H3, H5): Contractual Justice emerges as the most dominant predictor of Supplier Satisfaction (O = 0.375). In the dynamic MRO industry where work scopes and technical specifications frequently change mid project, suppliers place the highest premium on procedural fairness and transparent contract adjustments. Client Trust (O = 0.340) and Payment Reliability (O = 0.296) also provide a strong psychological foundation by reducing relational uncertainty and ensuring cash flow stability, which are critical for maintaining long term harmony.
2. Drivers of Performance (H2, H4, H6): While the three independent variables directly enhance performance, their direct coefficients are relatively smaller (Trust = 0.091; Justice = 0.173; Payment = 0.133). Analytically, this suggests that while fair rules, trust, and timely payments guarantee basic operational compliance, they act more as foundational prerequisites rather than the ultimate drivers of exceptional performance.
3. The Role of Satisfaction on Performance (H7): Supplier Satisfaction exerts a massive and dominant direct influence on Supplier Performance (O = 0.614). This proves that a satisfied supplier transitions from mere contractual compliance to intrinsic motivation, willingly investing extra effort, demonstrating higher agility, and delivering superior precision beyond the minimum requirements.

Mediation Analysis (Indirect Effects) To validate H8, H9, and H10, the specific indirect effects were analyzed.

Table 4. Mediation Effect Results (Indirect Effects)

Hypothesis	Path	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics	P Values	Result
H8	Client Trust → SS → Supplier Performance	0.209	4265	0.000	Accepted
H9	Contractual Justice → SS → Supplier Performance	0.230	2883	0.004	Accepted
H10	Payment Reliability → SS → Supplier Performance	0.182	3347	0.001	Accepted

Source: Data Processed from SmartPLS Bootstrapping (2025)

Table 4 confirms that Supplier Satisfaction significantly mediates the relationship between all three independent variables and Supplier Performance, as indicated by P Values < 0.05.

Analytical Interpretation of Mediation

The statistical significance of these indirect pathways uncovers the true behavioral mechanism at play:

1. For Client Trust (H8, O = 0.209), trust does not mechanically force performance; instead, it cultivates a secure collaborative environment (satisfaction), which in turn stabilizes the relationship and encourages peak performance.
2. For Contractual Justice (H9, O = 0.230), perceived fairness translates into deep satisfaction, mitigating conflict and opportunistic behavior, thereby driving a stronger commitment to operational targets.
3. For Payment Reliability (H10, O = 0.182), timely payments alleviate financial distress, generating a level of satisfaction that enables suppliers to focus their resources entirely on service quality rather than administrative disputes. Overall, this confirms the core premise of the study: corporate governance strategies only reach their full potential in driving operational excellence when they successfully fulfill the psychological and affective needs of the suppliers.

Simultaneous Effect (R Square)

The predictive power of the model is demonstrated by the R Square values.

Table 5. R Square Results

Variable	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Interpretation
Supplier Satisfaction	0.838	0.835	Strong
Supplier Performance	0.857	0.852	Strong

Source: Data Processed from SmartPLS Algorithm (2025)

Table 5 indicates that 83.5% (Adjusted R Square) of the variance in Supplier Satisfaction is explained by the governance variables, and the model explains 85.2% (Adjusted R Square) of the variance in Supplier Performance.

Analytical Interpretation of R Square

These high R Square values signify a very strong predictive model. Analytically, this implies that the combination of relational (trust), structural (contractual justice), and financial (payment) factors almost entirely captures the dynamics of supplier management at PT TSI. It demonstrates that supplier underperformance is rarely an isolated technical issue; rather, it is a systemic outcome heavily dependent on how the client holistically governs the partnership.

Discussion

The Influence of Client Trust on Supplier Satisfaction and Performance

The findings reveal that Client Trust significantly enhances Supplier Satisfaction (β = 0.340) and Supplier Performance (β = 0.091). This result is deeply rooted in the *Inter organizational Relationship Theory* and *Trust Based Theory*, which emphasize that business relationships are not solely governed by formal contracts but by relational norms. Analytically, trust reduces the perceived risk and uncertainty faced by suppliers, such as the fear of opportunistic behavior or sudden unilateral changes by the client. When suppliers trust PT Torishima Services Indonesia (TSI), they feel psychologically secure. This sense of security translates into high satisfaction, as corroborated by Ganguly & Roy (2021). Consequently, this trust encourages suppliers to shift their focus from protective, defensive behaviors to proactive collaboration, thereby directly improving their performance such as completing tasks on time and adhering to strict MRO quality standards.

The Influence of Contractual Justice on Supplier Satisfaction and Performance

Contractual Justice emerged as the strongest direct predictor of Supplier Satisfaction (β = 0.375) and significantly impacts Supplier Performance (β = 0.173). This finding strongly supports the *Organizational Justice and Contractual Governance Theory*, which posits that the perception of fairness dictates a supplier's attitude and behavior. In the dynamic and highly customized MRO industry, project scopes frequently change mid execution. When TSI manages these changes transparently and distributes risks fairly (Procedural and Distributive Justice), suppliers perceive the relationship as equitable. This perceived equity validates the partnership, drastically reducing conflict and fostering deep satisfaction, aligning with Carter & Wagner (2025). From a performance standpoint, suppliers who are treated fairly are intrinsically motivated to reciprocate by maintaining high quality service and operational flexibility, ensuring that TSI's high risk energy projects are not compromised.

The Influence of Payment Reliability on Supplier Satisfaction and Performance

Payment Reliability exerts a significant positive effect on both Supplier Satisfaction (β = 0.296) and Supplier Performance (β = 0.133). Grounded in *Transaction Cost Perspective* and *Reliability Theory*, this finding explains that timely and transparent financial fulfillment is a tangible manifestation of a client's commitment. For suppliers, many of which provide highly specialized components or services, cash flow stability is critical for operational survival. When TSI consistently meets its financial obligations, it eliminates the financial distress that often plagues suppliers. This reliability allows suppliers to allocate their resources efficiently toward fulfilling MRO technical requirements rather than chasing delayed payments. Therefore, payment reliability acts as a foundational pillar that not only satisfies the supplier but also guarantees the continuous, high quality output required for MRO operations, supporting Awatara (2023) and Kilay et al. (2022).

The Dominant Role of Supplier Satisfaction on Performance

The analysis demonstrates that Supplier Satisfaction has a massive and dominant direct influence on Supplier Performance (β = 0.614). Based on *Supplier Relationship Management Theory*, this highlights that supplier satisfaction is not merely a "feel good" metric but a critical strategic asset. A satisfied supplier evaluates the holistic experience—relational, economic, and operational—positively. This positive affective state intrinsically motivates suppliers to go beyond basic contractual compliance, leading to superior responsiveness, agility, and quality. This aligns with Ahmed et al. (2020) and Wu et al. (2022), who argue that a satisfied supplier is more likely to invest extra effort to ensure the success of the client's projects.

The Mediating Role of Supplier Satisfaction: A Psychological and Relational Mechanism

A pivotal contribution of this study is the confirmation that Supplier Satisfaction significantly mediates the influence of Client Trust (β= 0.209), Contractual Justice (β = 0.230), and Payment Reliability (β = 0.182) on Supplier Performance. This finding theoretically bridges the gap identified in previous studies (e.g., Ariesty, 2023) by demonstrating that governance mechanisms rarely dictate performance directly.

According to *Relational Governance Theory*, structural compliance (fair contracts) and financial discipline (reliable payments) must first be internalized by the supplier as positive relational experiences. Trust, justice, and payment reliability act as the inputs that fulfill the supplier's expectations, generating a state of satisfaction. Satisfaction, functioning as a psychological and relational mechanism, then converts these positive governance practices into tangible operational excellence. In the context of long term business relationships, this means TSI cannot force high performance purely through rigid rules or technical demands. Instead, TSI must strategically cultivate satisfaction by being a trustworthy, fair, and financially reliable partner. By "winning the hearts" of its suppliers through satisfaction, TSI ensures a resilient, high performing supply chain capable of sustaining the rigorous demands of the energy MRO industry.

CONCLUSION

Scientific Reflection on Main Findings

This study concludes that in the high stakes, precision driven Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) industry, supplier performance cannot be sustained solely through rigid technical demands or formal contracts. The empirical findings demonstrate that Client Trust, Contractual Justice, and Payment Reliability are fundamental pillars that significantly and positively influence both Supplier Satisfaction and Supplier Performance. More importantly, the study scientifically establishes that Supplier Satisfaction is not merely a secondary outcome, but the critical psychological and relational catalyst that bridges client governance to actual operational excellence. Governance strategies—whether relational, structural, or financial—reach their full potential only when they successfully fulfill the affective needs of the suppliers, transforming basic contractual compliance into proactive, high quality performance.

Specific Theoretical Implications

Theoretically, this study advances *Inter organizational Relationship Theory* and *Relational Governance Theory* by offering a comprehensive, integrative model that synthesizes relational, structural, and financial dimensions. Specifically, it clarifies the often fragmented literature regarding the direct impact of trust on performance by proving that its effect is largely channeled through a psychological mechanism: satisfaction. By positioning Supplier Satisfaction as a strategic mediator, this research shifts the paradigm from viewing trust, fair contracts, and reliable payments as direct mechanical drivers of performance, to viewing them

as essential antecedents that build a highly motivated and satisfied supply chain ecosystem. This integrated framework provides a robust theoretical foundation for future supply chain management research in high risk industrial contexts.

Applicable Managerial Recommendations

Practically, to close the performance gap, PT Torishima Services Indonesia (TSI) and similar MRO organizations must transition from a purely transactional approach to a relationship based vendor management strategy. Based on the descriptive and verificatory findings, management is recommended to implement the following actionable strategies:

1. Strengthening Trust and Justice: Formulate clear, mutually agreed upon Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) specifically for managing changes in project scopes (change orders). This ensures procedural fairness, prevents unilateral decisions, and demonstrates the client's integrity and respect for the supplier's contributions.
2. Enhancing Payment Reliability: Standardize and simplify payment administration procedures. Management should consider implementing an integrated, transparent digital payment tracking portal where suppliers can monitor their invoice status in real time, thereby reducing financial uncertainty and administrative disputes.
3. Institutionalizing Satisfaction: Treat supplier satisfaction as a primary Key Performance Indicator (KPI) for the procurement team. By establishing responsive problem solving coordination (e.g., assigning a dedicated Person in Charge for supplier grievances), the company can systematically "win the hearts" of its partners, ensuring long term agility and superior performance.

Limitations and Future Research Agenda

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, it employs a cross sectional design, capturing data at a single point in time, which limits the ability to observe how trust, satisfaction, and performance dynamically evolve over the lifecycle of long term projects. Second, the research is confined to a single organization (PT TSI) within the specific context of the MRO energy sector in Indonesia, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other industries or regions. Third, the measurement of supplier performance relies on the self reported perceptions of the suppliers, which may introduce perceptual bias.

For future research, scholars are encouraged to adopt longitudinal approaches to track the temporal evolution of buyer supplier dynamics. Expanding the sample to multiple companies across different sectors (e.g., manufacturing vs. services) would enhance the external validity of the model. Additionally, future studies should incorporate objective operational data (e.g., actual defect rates, precise delivery delay logs) to complement perceptual measures, providing a more holistic evaluation of supplier performance.

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