MEDIATING EFFECT OF SUPPLY CHAIN RISK MANAGEMENT AND INFORMATION SHARING ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SUPPLY CHAIN INTEGRATION AND PERFORMANCE IN MALAYSIAN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES

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DEDICATION

To my beloved parents, who have always supported me and encouraged me to pursue my dreams. You have been my constant source of inspiration and guidance, and I owe all my success to your unwavering love and care.

To my loving family especially my siblings, who have been my pillars of strength and a source of happiness. Your presence in my life has made all the difference, and I am forever grateful for your unconditional love and support.

To the love of my life, who has been my partner in all my joys and sorrows. Your unwavering support and understanding have made my life complete, and I cannot imagine a life without you.

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Avlyin Jay



ABSTRACT

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role as the backbone of the Malaysian economy. The integration of supply chain activities is an important aspect of a firm to enhance its supply chain performance. However, there is still much to explore about the role of supply chain integration in the performance of SMEs. Furthermore, there is a lack of literature that has studied the mediating role of supply chain risk and information sharing in the relationship between supply chain integration and supply chain performance. Therefore, this study aims to address the research gaps through a quantitative study. Random sampling technique was used to collect the data from respondents. A total of 242 responses were collected via a questionnaire from SMEs listed in Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers' directory. SPSS and SmartPLS software were used to analyse the collected data. Findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between supply chain integration and supply chain performance. Similarly, a significant relationship between supply chain integration and supply chain risk management as well as supply chain integration and information sharing were found. In addition, information sharing had a significant relationship with supply chain performance. However, insignificant relationship is found between supply chain risk management and supply chain performance. The findings showed that supply chain risk management did not mediate the relationship between supply chain integration and supply chain performance, whereas information sharing did mediate the relationship between supply chain integration and supply chain performance. This implies that to enhance the performance of SMEs supply chain, it is important to emphasise on supply chain integration and information sharing.



ABSTRAK

Perusahaan Kecil and Sederhana (PKS) memainkan peranan penting sebagai tulang belakang ekonomi Malaysia. Integrasi aktiviti rantaian bekalan adalah aspek penting bagi firma meningkatkan prestasi rantaian bekalan. Walaubagaimanapun, terdapat jurang pengetahuan tentang peranan integrasi rantaian bekalan dalam prestasi PKS dalam kajian sedia ada. Selain itu, kajian mengenai peranan risiko rantaian bekalan dan perkongsian maklumat sebagai perantara dalam hubungan di antara integrasi rantaian bekalan dan prestasi rantaian bekalan masih kurang. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menangani jurang pengetahuan dan penyelidikan ini melalui kajian kuantitatif. Teknik persampelan rawak digunakan untuk mengumpul data dari responden. Sebanyak 242 maklum balas telah dikumpul melalui soal selidik dalam kalangan PKS yang tersenarai dalam direktori Federation of Malaysian Manufacturers. Perisian SPSS dan SmartPLS digunakan untuk menganalisis data yang dikumpul. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan yang signifikan antara integrasi rantaian bekalan dan prestasi rantaian bekalan. Dapatan yang signifikan turut diperolehi bagi hubungan diantara integrasi rantaian bekalan dan pengurusan risiko rantaian bekalan serta integrasi rantaian bekalan dengan perkongsian maklumat. Selain itu, perkongsian maklumat mempunyai hubungan yang signifikan dengan prestasi rantaian bekalan. Walaubagaimanapun, hubungan yang tidak signifikan diperolehi antara pengurusan risiko rantaian bekalan dan prestasi rantaian bekalan. Hasil dapatan menunjukkan bahawa pengurusan risiko rantaian bekalan tidak memainkan peranan sebagai perantara dalam hubungan antara integrasi rantaian bekalan dan prestasi rantaian bekalan. Sementara itu, perkongsian maklumat memainkan peranan sebagai perantara dalam hubungan antara integrasi rantaian bekalan dan prestasi rantaian bekalan. Ini bermakna adalah penting untuk PKS menekankan aspek integrasi rantaian bekalan dan perkongsian maklumat bagi meningkatkan prestasi rantaian bekalan sektor tersebut.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- *FMM* Federation of Malaysian Manufacturing
- GDP Gross Domestic Product
- SCOM Supply Chain Operations Model
- SCOR Supply Chain Operations Reference
- SEM Structural Equation Modelling
- SMEs Small Medium Enterprises

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Supply chain integration is important part in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) facilitate the provision of products and services to the end consumer. The integration can improve the performance of firms' supply chain, especially in today's highly competitive business environment and economic condition. Furthermore, globalisation and information technology can affect the world economy by creating healthy, sustainable, and rapid supply chain management (Xu *et al.*, 2014). The pressures of lowering trade barriers while progressing in transportation, information, and communication technology must be addressed to expand companies supply chain beyond the national level (Golini & Kalchschmidt, 2011).



Modern firms are increasingly dependent in complex networks of supply chain partners to deliver goods and services in the accurate quantity at the right time and place under persistent cost and quality pressures (Munir *et al.*, 2020). The fast changing and complex environment as well as complicated operational strategies of firms contribute to the high level of vulnerability in supply chain. Effective supply chain management through integration, collaboration and risk management is therefore necessary for firms enhance their competitive performance. The need to overcome these challenges in managing supply chain are especially important for SMEs as they make up the largest proportion of industry sector in Malaysia, which will have a direct impact on the country's economy. The supply chain consists of firm collaboration in order to improve the overall operating efficiency. There is still much to explore in the role of supply chain risk management and information sharing in enhancing supply chain performance. In addition, there is a lack of literature that has incorporated supply chain risk management and information sharing as a mediating variable in understanding the relationship between supply chain integration and supply chain performance. As a result, in this study, supply chain integration, supply chain risk, and information sharing are examined as independent variables, while supply chain performance is examined as a dependent variable. This chapter is intended to give an overview of the background, the problem statement, the research questions, research objectives, scope, definition of key terms used in this study, and the organisation of this thesis.

1.2 Background of study

In Malaysia, SMEs play an essential role in economic development where 90% of the businesses are formed by SMEs and about 32% of the SMEs contribute to the gross domestic product (Gunto & Alias, 2013). SMEs are considered as the national economic backbone that helps to improve the country's social and political stability and serve as a crucial growth engine in many countries (Al Barwani *et al.*, 2014). Malaysian SMEs have great potential to develop significant domestic sourcing by integrating the supply chain to support the nation's economy (Ha *et al.*, 2016). Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim also stress that the government policy focus on the improving the capability of the SMEs sector (Ying & Adilla, 2023). Furthermore, SMEs are essential in developing countries because they aid economic growth and income distribution and improve economic structure during the country's downturns (Hassen, Abd Rahim, Shah, 2019).

SMEs is very important to the development of the country where the SMEs provide the opportunities in term of job and in directly it helps to increase the economy of the country. According to Claire (2022) the Prime Minister Datuk Seri Ismail Sabri Yaakob mentioned that the government plan for SMEs by 2025 SMEs will contribute 45% to the Malaysian gross domestic product (GDP) which is in line with the 12th



Malaysian Plan. In 2019 the Malaysian SMEs contributed 39% of the Malaysia GDP before it was affected by the covid-19 pandemic. The Malaysian GDP in 2020 contracted by 5.6%, as compared to in 2019, when the GDP was 4.3%. In March 2020, the government implemented the Movement Control Order (MCO) phases to contain the outbreak of the Covid-19 (Mahidin, 2021). Thus, the performance of economic activities such as domestic supply and demand factors was affected and influenced the external sector, which led to the Malaysian economy recording negative growth in the year 2020. The private sector drove the domestic demand. Despite the challenging external environment, Malaysian SMEs have remained resilient in their contribution to the GDP and can maintain a respectable growth economy in 2020 (Mahidin, 2021). The GDP of 2020 shown in Figure 1.1.

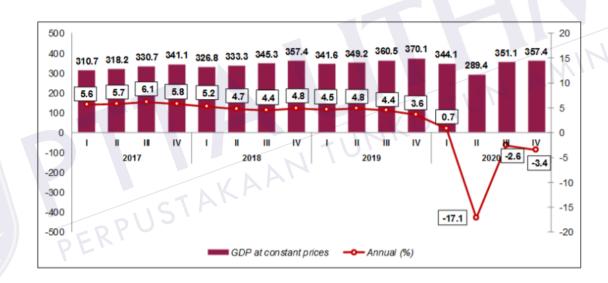


Figure 1.1: Malaysia GDP (RM billion) and annual percentage change (%) (DOSM, 2020)

As shown in Figure 1.1 from year 2017 to year 2020, it shows the decline of the economy, especially in the year 2020. In 2020, the service sector recorded a negative growth of 5.5%, followed by the manufacturing sector, which contracted 2.6%, the agriculture sector, which recorded a decline of 2.2%, the construction sector, which decreased to 19.4%, and mining and quarrying at negative 10% (Mahidin, 2021). The implications of the COVID-19 pandemic have affected the economy, disposable income, which indicates a slowdown, and decreased the Gross National

Income (GNI) per capita from RM45, 212 in 2019 to RM42, 531 in 2020, which led to a reduction in domestic consumption expenditure (Mahidin, 2021).



Figure 1.2: Contribution of SMEs in Malaysian Economy (DOSM, 2018)

Malaysian SMEs contributed 38.9% of RM552.3 billion to GDP in 2019, a slight increase from the previous year's contribution of 38.3% of RM522.1 billion. SMEs contributed to GDP through domestic demand, investment activities, particularly consumption, and additional financial assistance (Mahidin, 2021). Although SMEs are smaller in size, they still have an advantage in management flexibility, resilience, strong reactive ability, and vitality to compete with local and international enterprises (Jaharuddin, Mansor & Yaakob, 2016). Still there are many challenges faced by the SMEs due to the Covid-19 pandemic such as higher operating costs caused by the increase in fuel price as well as unstable political condition. Unstable political causes the delay of the investment inflows and its detriment the SMEs (Vaghefi & Jo-Yee, 2021). In addition, SME Corp Malaysia & Huawei (2018) stated that the smaller firms tend to lack resources and funding needed to upskill and reskill their workers.

There is an important benefit of supply chain integration in firm in term of flexibility it allows different parties to step in to help each other to maintain efficiency and productivity levels (Morrow, 2020). The supply chain that is not integrated are more likely to perform tasks unnecessary and redundant tasks. With the supply chain integration, it can help the organisation to work efficient and productively in short term and long term. Supply chain integration also centralised the data which to ensure the different third-party participants in supply chain are working with the same



information. The short term and long-term benefits of data centralisation include the ability to pinpoint areas of inefficiency and improving both sale and demand forecast accuracy. Besides that, supply chain integration boosts transparency capabilities, which in turn increase the efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity in businesses where the supply chain can clearly view in real time the activities and processes that one another doing. Supply chain integration can also provide a significant benefit to profit margins for all third-party businesses involved (Morrow, 2020). In addition, when the businesses work together, they are more likely to gain competitive advantage by discovering innovative solutions. The creative solutions can translate into substantial financial rewards that benefits all third-party participants within the supply chain (Morrow, 2020).

According to Tehseen and Ramayah (2015), the Malaysian economy is mainly dependent on the manufacturing and service sector. The Malaysian manufacturing sector is ranked 23rd in the world and 17th in the world's largest export (Tehseen & Ramayah, 2015). Malaysian manufacturing ranked 7th in the year 2021 with \$87.55 billion, which is an increase of 16.61% from 2020. In the year of 2022 Malaysia ranked 39th in the world. The growth in sales value for each manufacturing sector in Malaysia are as follows: Electricals & Electronics Product (24.7%), Petroleum, Chemical, Rubber & Plastic Product (27.2%), Transport Equipment & Other Manufactures (21.6%), Wood, Furniture, Paper Products & Printing (12%), Textile, Wearing, Apparel, Leather & Footwear (9.7%), Non-Metallic Mineral Products, Basic Metal & Fabricated Metal (9.5%) and Food, Beverages & Tobacco Products (7.1%) subsectors (DOSM, 2022). Tehseen and Ramayah (2015) stated that Malaysia's manufacturing and service sector has a problem maintaining quality, fast delivery of products, and sustaining competitiveness. The SMEs' other challenges are the limitations posed by their low competitiveness, financial performance, insufficient agility, low productivity, and low-quality output of the product. This caused a lack of capability to meet the globalisation requirement standard (Jahharuddin et. al., 2016; Smith, & Ulu 2017).

Rapid changes in environments, technological advancements, and market globalisation shape companies' awareness to optimise the overall performance of the supply chain rather than the individual organisation (Manfredi & Capik, 2022). Costantino *et al.* (2015) reported the lack of coordination between each partner in an organisation without considering other partners' effect, thereby negatively affecting the supply chain activities and the performance. Many studies have shown that supply chain integration can improve the supply chain performance of firms related to operations, profit, finance, and customer service (Flynn *et al.*, 2010; Cao, Hou & Zhao, 2015; Alshurideh *et al.*, 2022). Abdallah *et al.* (2021) found no consensus on effect supply chain integration on the supply chain performance. The lack of coordination in the supply chain can cause various inefficiencies, like the bullwhip effect and inventory instability (Costantino *et al.*, 2014).

Wong *et al.* (2015) pointed out that 60% of companies cannot achieve their expected return on investment from the supply chain's technological expenses. Chibba, (2015) argue that the measures do not capture the overall performance of the supply chain, nor do they indicate opportunities for increasing the competitiveness of customer value and the value of each actor in the supply chain. Moreover, Duffy *et al.* (2015) claimed that the lack of information infrastructure makes it difficult for firms to collect information from collaborating partners. Information sharing is a critical part of supply chain management because it guides firms to increase effectiveness (Spaho, 2016). Therefore, this research aims to investigate the role of supply chain risk management, information sharing and supply chain integration on the performance of Malaysian SMEs.



There are a few research that have investigated the role of various factor of supply chain integration. The research found that the supply chain integration offers numerous benefits to firms, suppliers, and customers as it enhances effectiveness and efficiencies of the supply chain operation. Supply chain integration is a critical factor in the success of business, particularly in SMEs. The integration of the supply chain in Malaysian SMEs has been crucial for enhancing the competitiveness and productivity of the businesses. According to the Dahlan & Rahman (2022), the effectiveness of the supply chain integration has been identified as a significant driver for SMEs to achieve the

sustainability of their competitive advantage. The integration process involves the synchronisation of the activities across all stages of the supply chain which can lead to better coordination, communication, and collaboration among supplier, manufacturers, distributors, and retailers. However, the supply chain integration in Malaysian SMEs is often hampered by the various challenges. It is crucial to implement the supply chain integration in firm to enhance the performance of firm. Some researchers tried to investigate the implementation of supply chain integration in Malaysian SMEs but the effectiveness of supply chain integration as a core function on the organisation is still questionable. This is due to the lack of appreciation of how supply chain integration drive changes in the business processes for better quality service, efficiency, and cost reduction in SMEs (Setvaningsih, & Kelle, 2021). Besides, the other issues in supply chain integration for Malaysian SMEs is the lack of collaboration and communication among supply chain partners. Abdul Rahman et al. (2022) stated the Malaysian SMEs facing a challenge in integrating with their partners due to the differences in culture, communication barriers, and limited resources. This causes to the lack of transparency, leading to delays, misunderstanding, and supply chain disruptions.



Supply chain risk management is also crucial for firm to address the risk faced by companies and identify the potential risks that might arise from the various events (Mustafa & Yaakub, 2020). The risk of covid-19 pandemic impact on the SMEs firm has been immense (Vaghefi & Jo-Yee, 2021). According to Vaghefi and Jo-Yee (2021) in year 2021, the performance of business 21% expecting poor and 25% are optimistic. Lim and Ng (2022) stated most of the common risks faced by the SMEs includes quality issues, delivery delays, financial risks, and supply chain disruptions. The risks can have severe consequences, such as increased costs, reputational damage, and the loss of customers. According to the study by Fauzi et al. (2022), they found the SMEs in Malaysia often focus on the short-terms risks such as price fluctuation and supply chain disruptions, and do not have a long-term strategy to manage the risks such as political instability, natural disasters, and cyber threats. Besides that, SMEs facing the risk of higher operating cost because of higher fuel prices and complications from the pandemic and the political risk that have surfaced is another threat to the Malaysian SMEs. When the ASEAN countries engaged in fierce competition to attract foreign investment the unstable political condition in Malaysia can deter and delay the investment inflows, which is detriment to the SMEs (Vaghefi & Jo-Yee, 2021). Therefore, it is important to strengthen the integration of the local firms into the global value and supply chain for the SMEs firm to become more competitive on the international stage (Vaghefi & Jo-Yee, 2021). Even from the qualitative studies perspective, factors affecting supply chain integration in Malaysian SMEs had been researched. But there is a little research that examine the precise circumstances surrounding supply chain integration in SMEs.

Budiarto, Prabowo, and Herawan, (2017) stated the firms are unable to appreciate how supply chain integration can change business processes through cost efficiency and service quality due to a lack of knowledge in supply chain management. It also makes firms incapable of using supply chain integration to deal with the financial affairs, fast product delivery, and productivity, thus making them unable to meet the globalisation standards requirement (Setyaningsih, & Kelle, 2021). Besides, the lack of information sharing in firms leads to the inefficiency of the organisation's coordinated action (Lotfi *et al.*, 2013) and not much is known about the supply chain risk faced by Malaysian automotive SMEs (Hudin *et al.*, 2017).



Meanwhile, in supply chain management, information sharing is crucial for improving the performance of the company and critical issue in supply chain integration for Malaysian SMEs. According to Ong and Lim (2022), the lack of information sharing among supply chain partners has been identified as a significant barrier to achieve the effectiveness of the integration. The issue arises due to the lack of trust, communication barriers, and inadequate technology infrastructure. Idris et al. (2022) stated the Malaysian SMEs lack trust in their partners which can lead to the reluctance to share the information that hinders supply chain visibility and the coordination. According to Duffy et al. (2015), there is a scarcity of studies on supply chain integration methods, particularly in terms of data collection between partners. The lack of information sharing in firms leads to the inefficiency of the organisation coordinated action (Lotfi et al., 2013). In addition, Abdallah et al. (2021) stated there was no consensus on the effect of supply chain integration on supply chain performance from existing literature. Further, Chibba (2015) added that the supply chain's overall performance does not show the opportunities in increasing the competitiveness and customer value in supply chain management. On the other hand,

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