

**THE IMPACT OF SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ON
SUPPLY CHAIN PERFORMANCE IN APPAREL SECTOR IN SRI LANKA
(WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO WESTERN PROVINCE)**

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ABSTRACT

The apparel industry in Sri Lanka is crucial for export and employment. Effective supply chain operations, particularly through Supplier Relationship Management (SRM), are crucial to competitiveness. This study examines the impact of SRM strategies on supply chain performance in Western Province, with the aim of improving efficiency and resilience in the market, focusing on the apparel sector's role in economic development. Dynamic capability and contingency theories were used to explain the theoretical aspects of this study. Based on the empirical findings, the researcher selected supplier collaboration, supplier performance, supplier risk management, and supplier communication as independent variables. Hypotheses were developed to test whether these independent variables have a significant impact on supply chain performance in the apparel sector in the Western Province of Sri Lanka. This quantitative study is exploratory. A structured questionnaire was distributed to 302 management and executive-level employees to collect data. The sample was selected using the systematic sampling method. The collected data were analyzed using the SPSS package, and reliability, correlation, and regression analyses were conducted to test the hypotheses. According to the reliability analysis, all variables were reliable ($P > 0.7$), and the Pearson correlation coefficient indicated a positive relationship between all independent and dependent variables. The R^2 value of the model summary indicated that 67.4% of the independent variables explained the dependent variable. In the regression analysis, all the hypotheses were accepted based on the decision rule, where the significance value (P) was < 0.05 . Based on the findings of this study, the researcher recommends direct engagement with stakeholders involved in SRM practices as crucial. Future research could expand the scope to include additional industries or regions, and consider qualitative approaches for a deeper understanding of SRM practices.

Keywords: Supplier collaboration, supplier communication, supplier performance, supplier risk management, supply chain performance