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Maintaining Effective Supplier Partnerships: An Analysis of the Finance Department at Wesleyan University Philippines

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Abstract *— This study examines the effectiveness of supplier relationship management practices within the Finance Department at Wesleyan University Philippines, with an emphasis on communication, trust, performance support, and operational challenges. Using a descriptive research design, data were collected from 32 suppliers and 10 finance personnel through a structured questionnaire utilizing a four-point Likert scale. The study assessed four key dimensions: communication and collaboration; trust and fairness; performance support and evaluation; and challenges encountered in managing supplier relationships. Findings revealed that the Finance Department is generally effective in maintaining supplier partnerships, as indicated by favorable overall weighted means across the first three dimensions. Communication practices were found to be clear and responsive, though collaborative engagements could be further enhanced. Trust and fairness were strongly evident, with suppliers perceiving transparency and ethical dealings, although consistency in honoring contractual agreements requires improvement. Performance support and evaluation practices were also effective, but the provision of supplier training and guidance emerged as an area needing attention. Meanwhile, challenges such as delivery delays, coordination issues, and pricing fluctuations were identified as moderate concerns that may affect operational efficiency. Overall, the study highlights the importance of continuous improvement in supplier relationship management to strengthen collaboration, enhance supplier performance, and ensure sustainable institutional operations.*

Keywords *— **Communication, Higher Education Institutions, Performance Evaluation, Supplier Relationship Management, Trust and Fairness***

I. INTRODUCTION

The success of suppliers' relationships in today's organizational context determines the level of productivity, financial integrity, and sustainability within institutions. Institutions of higher learning, like Wesleyan University Philippines, use supplier relationship systems as part of ensuring that services and products are available to them in a timely fashion. In this regard, the Finance Department is charged with facilitating the processing of transactions as well as creating effective supplier relationships.

Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) has shifted from a transactional process to a strategy for creating value through strategic relationships. Effective supplier relationships require communication, trust, and collaboration as some of the key aspects in their success (Li et al., 2022; Dubey et al., 2021). In this context, it becomes important to acknowledge that finance departments have roles that go beyond transactions to include managing relationships as well.

Effective management of relationships between suppliers and organizations improves their financial performance and increases institutional reputation and resiliency. Studies have found that effective communication and proper financial behavior are

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critical to improving suppliers' satisfaction and loyalty (Ruiz et al., 2014; Li et al., 2022). Moreover, creating a sense of trust and facilitating information flow contribute to forming resilient supply chains, especially under conditions of uncertainty (Dubey et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the use of formal processes for evaluating supplier performance and prompt payments has been found to enhance reliability and service quality (Kumar & Rahman, 2023). In university settings, good governance and transparency in procurement practices are also closely related to issues of accountability and credibility (Almeida & Silva, 2024). Although there have been great strides made, some difficulties organizations still face include issues around payments, communications, and prices (Mzembe et al., 2023).

Based on the recommendations from visiting accreditors, this paper explores how the Finance Department of Wesleyan University Philippines develops, sustains, and enhances supplier relationships. The objective is to determine if existing processes reflect transparency, integrity, and collaboration based on supplier perspectives using a questionnaire. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions: (1) How do suppliers perceive the Finance Department's practices in terms of communication and collaboration? (2) To what extent does the department foster trust and fairness? (3) How does it support and evaluate supplier performance? and (4) What common challenges are encountered in managing supplier relationships?

II. METHODOLOGY

Descriptive research method was used in this study as outlined by Subia et al., (2020), to analyze the existing practices and problems in managing relationships with suppliers in the Finance Department of Wesleyan University of the Philippines. Respondents for the study consisted of 32 suppliers and 10 employees from the WUP Finance Department. Information was collected through the use of a structured questionnaire, which was completed by the selected suppliers who were in frequent transactions with the department, along with 10 members of the department. The structured questionnaire was designed into four main parts: Communication and Collaboration, Trust and Fairness, Performance Support and Evaluation, and Problems in Dealing with Suppliers. The responses in each part were measured using a four-point Likert scale with values ranging from 1 (Disagree/Not Effective) to 4 (Agree/Effective). The period for data collection took one month. The results were analyzed quantitatively to determine overall trends and areas for improvement in supplier relationship management using weighted means.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Communication and Collaboration

Table 1. Communication and Collaboration between the Finance Department of WUP and its Suppliers

A. Communication and Collaboration	Wm	Verbal Description
1. The Finance Department communicates clearly and regularly with suppliers.	3.70	Agree/Effective
2. Suppliers receive timely updates about orders and payments.	3.61	Agree/Effective
3. The Finance Department promptly addresses supplier inquiries and concerns.	3.65	Agree/Effective
4. There are effective channels for two-way communication with suppliers.	3.57	Agree/Effective
5. Collaborative meetings with suppliers are held frequently to discuss needs and issues.	3.24	Moderately Agree/Moderate Effective
6. The Finance Department personalizes communication to suit different suppliers.	3.57	Agree/Effective
7. There is a structured process for resolving communication breakdowns with suppliers.	3.39	Agree/Effective
Overall Weighted Mean	3.53	Agree/Effective

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Table 1 presents the responses of the suppliers to the questionnaire concerning the topic of communication and collaboration. From the data presented in Table 1, it may be observed that the perception of suppliers regarding communication and collaboration with the Finance Department of Wesleyan University Philippines is positive. It is based on the fact that the overall weighted mean score is 3.53, which is under the "Agree/Effective" category.

From the results, the topmost weighted mean, which is 3.70, is that of the communication aspect, implying that the suppliers strongly believe that the Finance Department communicates effectively and frequently. The second-highest weighted mean is that of the timely response (3.65), while that of frequent orders and payments updates is 3.61. From these results, it is evident that responsiveness and communication are among the strengths of this particular department.

On the contrary, the minimum value of the weighted mean of 3.24 shows that meetings with suppliers are not often held and are considered "Moderately Effective" only. It means that there is no proactive approach in engaging suppliers, and the level of collaboration can be improved. Although communication works appropriately, the infrequency of holding meetings can limit chances to resolve issues together and make joint plans. It means that the Finance Department can develop relationships with suppliers by engaging in collaboration more than just communicating (Fernández Castillo, Khalid & Salas, 2024).

2. Trust and Fairness

Table 2. Trust and Fairness between the Finance Department of WUP and its Suppliers

B. Trust and Fairness (7 items)	Wm	Verbal Description
1. The Finance Department treats all suppliers fairly and equitably.	3.74	Agree/Effective
2. Contractual agreements with suppliers are consistently honored.	3.23	Moderately Agree/Moderate Effective
3. The Finance Department maintains the confidentiality of sensitive supplier information.	3.70	Agree/Effective
4. Suppliers feel valued and appreciated by the Finance Department.	3.65	Agree/Effective
5. There is transparency in pricing and payment processes with suppliers.	3.74	Agree/Effective
6. The Finance Department is trustworthy in all supplier dealings.	3.74	Agree/Effective
7. Disputes with suppliers are handled fairly and promptly.	3.74	Agree/Effective
Overall Weighted Mean	3.65	Agree/Effective

The responses of the suppliers regarding the trust and fairness topic are summarized in Table 2. From the result found in the table, it can be concluded that there exists a relatively high perception of trust and fairness among the suppliers of the Finance Department of Wesleyan University Philippines. This is evident from the total weighted mean score obtained of 3.65, which is considered to have an interpretation of "Agree/Effective".

About the single indicators, the highest weighted means of 3.74 were obtained by some aspects such as fairness in treatment, transparency in prices and payment, trustworthiness, and fairness in dispute resolution. The scores clearly indicate the strengths of the department with respect to integrity, transparency, and professionalism in dealings. Besides, the maintenance of confidentiality (3.70) and supplier value recognition (3.65) are other contributing factors that lead to a favorable image, suggesting that suppliers find the department trustworthy and respectable.

Nevertheless, the weighted mean score for the contract being honored, which was calculated at 3.23, shows that contractual agreements have been

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observed "Moderately Effectively." This means there might be an issue that may affect the trust level since it will influence the suppliers' level of compliance if not handled carefully. Thus, there is an underlying need for the finance department to be more consistent with their contractual agreements to promote trust (Knežević, Mandić, & Lipovac Tolić, 2022).

3. Performance Support and Evaluation

Table 3. Trust and Fairness between the Finance Department of WUP and its Suppliers

C. Performance Support and Evaluation	Wm	Verbal Description
1. The Finance Department provides constructive feedback to suppliers for improvement.	3.52	Agree/Effective
2. Supplier performance is regularly evaluated against clear benchmarks.	3.52	Agree/Effective
3. The Finance Department recognizes and rewards high-performing suppliers.	3.52	Agree/Effective
4. Flexibility is shown when suppliers request reasonable changes or accommodations.	3.57	Agree/Effective
5. The Finance Department supports suppliers in resolving operational issues.	3.61	Agree/Effective
6. Suppliers receive adequate training or guidance when needed.	3.22	Moderately Agree/Moderate Effective
7. Performance data is used to make informed decisions about supplier relationships.	3.61	Agree/Effective
Overall Weighted Mean	3.51	Agree/Effective

Reactions of the suppliers towards the item on the issues of trust and fairness have been provided in Table 3. On observing the results found in the table, one can observe that Finance Department of Wesleyan University Philippines is perceived to be effective in terms of performance support and performance evaluation. The above conclusion has been drawn based on the weighted mean of 3.51, which lies under the category of "Agree/Effective".

Strengths-wise, the top weighted mean score of 3.61 is noted for those related to assisting suppliers in addressing problems as well as making use of performance information in decision-making. The next highest rating of 3.57 comes from questions about the department's flexibility in dealing with requests made by suppliers. The scores mentioned above show that the Finance Department is responsive and flexible, which are necessary qualities for sustaining effective operations and ensuring that there is good collaboration with suppliers. Moreover, a consistent score of 3.52 has been earned for providing feedback, evaluating performance, and recognizing suppliers.

Nevertheless, a weighted mean value of 3.22 indicates that giving adequate training and/or directions to suppliers is "Moderately Effective," implying that although there are evaluation methods, there might not be much development of supplier skills. In this regard, it can be said that the Finance Department has an opportunity to improve the performance of its suppliers by focusing on training programs or guidance systems. Enhancing this factor will benefit both parties, ensuring sustainable and healthy relationships (Nfonoyim et al., 2023).

4. Challenges Encountered

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Table 4. Challenges Encountered by the WUP Finance Department

D. Challenges	Wm	Verbal Description
1. Delays in supplier deliveries frequently affect our operations.	3.09	Moderately Agree/Moderate Challenge
2. There are often misunderstandings due to unclear communication with suppliers.	2.48	Slightly Agree/Slight Challenge
3. Payment processing delays cause tension in supplier relationships.	2.35	Slightly Agree/Slight Challenge
4. Suppliers sometimes fail to meet quality standards consistently.	2.22	Slightly Agree/Slight Challenge
5. Managing multiple suppliers creates coordination challenges.	2.61	Moderately Agree/Moderate Challenge
6. Changes in supplier pricing are difficult to anticipate or manage.	2.57	Moderately Agree/Moderate Challenge
7. Resolving disputes with suppliers takes longer than expected	2.48	Slightly Agree/Slight Challenge
Overall Weighted Mean	2.54	Moderately Agree/Moderate Challenge

The table presents the challenges faced by the WUP Finance department when it comes to having an effective working relationship with the suppliers. Based on the findings presented in Table 4, it can be observed that the challenges faced by the Finance Department of Wesleyan University Philippines exist, but they are mostly manageable. This is evidenced by the average weighted mean of 2.54, which means "Moderately Agree/Moderate Challenge." This finding contrasts with those found in Tables 1-3, which were rated to have higher effectiveness scores.

From the above-discussed issues, the weighted mean score of 3.09 indicates that late deliveries from the suppliers are the primary challenge faced by the operations in the department. The second-highest weighted mean score is 2.61 for coordinating with different suppliers, while 2.57 shows that one of the biggest problems in operations is dealing with the challenges associated with prices. The results indicate that the department still faces certain challenges externally and logistically, which may influence its efficient operation despite good communication and trust among all participants.

On the contrary, since the minimum weight mean of 2.22 means that the inconsistency in supplier quality is not really a huge problem, one can conclude that payment delay issues (weight mean of 2.35), misunderstanding issues in communication (weight mean of 2.48) and dispute resolution delays (weight mean of 2.48) pose "Slight Challenges." This is true according to the previous results, wherein there were effective communication practices, trust, and performance management within the company. In this case, one can state that the relationships have been built effectively by the Finance Department, eliminating the possibility of major problems. Still, the Finance Department needs to work on enhancing delivery coordination and planning.

IV. CONCLUSION

1. The Finance Department demonstrates effective communication and collaboration with suppliers, though increased engagement through regular collaborative meetings could further strengthen partnerships.

2. The Finance Department is generally perceived as trustworthy and fair but improving consistency in honoring contractual agreements would further enhance supplier confidence.

3. While performance support and evaluation practices are effective, providing more training and guidance to suppliers would help improve overall supplier capability and performance.

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4. Although challenges are moderate and manageable, addressing delivery delays and coordination issues will be key to further improving supplier relationship efficiency.

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