

Supplier Quality Assurance and Business Performance Of Logistics Companies

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between supplier quality assurance (SQA) and business performance at Aramex Company Ltd Uganda. As the logistics industry in Uganda grows rapidly alongside increasing regional trade volumes and e-commerce penetration, supplier quality has emerged as a critical determinant of service delivery standards and overall business performance. A case study research design was adopted with a quantitative orientation. Using purposive and stratified random sampling, 164 respondents comprising Aramex procurement officers, operations staff, customer service agents, and key supply chain partners were selected. A structured questionnaire with a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.861 was used for data collection. Descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression analysis were employed using SPSS Version 26. The findings revealed significant positive correlations between supplier selection criteria ($r = 0.634$, $p < 0.01$), supplier performance monitoring ($r = 0.618$, $p < 0.01$), supplier development programmes ($r = 0.572$, $p < 0.01$), and business performance. The regression model explained 58.7% of variance in business performance (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.571$). Supplier selection criteria emerged as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.344$, $p < 0.001$). The study concludes that SQA is a critical driver of Aramex Uganda's business performance and recommends strengthening supplier evaluation frameworks, continuous performance monitoring, and structured supplier development programmes.

Keywords: Supplier quality assurance, business performance, logistics, Aramex Uganda, supply chain management, supplier development, procurement

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The logistics and supply chain management sector has undergone profound transformation globally over the past two decades, driven by the acceleration of global trade, the explosive growth of e-commerce, and the increasing complexity of multi-tier supply networks (A. I. Kazaara & Audrey, 2024). In this environment, supplier quality assurance (SQA), defined as the systematic processes through which organizations ensure that their suppliers consistently deliver inputs and services that meet predefined quality, reliability, and cost standards, has become a strategic imperative for logistics service providers (Monczka et al., 2023). The rationale is straightforward: in logistics operations, quality failures at the supplier level, whether in vehicles, fuel, packaging materials, IT systems, or subcontracted delivery services, propagate rapidly through the service chain to affect customer satisfaction, operational efficiency, and ultimately financial performance (Julius & Nancy, 2026).

Uganda's logistics sector is experiencing significant growth propelled by regional integration deepening through the East African Community, increasing export volumes of agricultural commodities and manufactured goods, and the rapid expansion of digital commerce platforms (Gracious, 2023). The Uganda Revenue Authority reports a 23 percent increase in import and export cargo volumes between 2021 and 2024, while e-commerce transactions in Uganda are projected to reach USD 1.2 billion by 2026 (URA, 2024; Jumia Africa E-Commerce Index, 2024). This growth creates expanding business opportunities for

logistics service providers but simultaneously intensifies competition and raises customer expectations for delivery speed, reliability, security, and cost-effectiveness(F. Christopher, Muhindo, et al., 2022).

Aramex Company Ltd is a global logistics and transportation company headquartered in Dubai with operations in over 65 countries(Sarah & Audrey, 2024). Aramex Uganda, established in 2008, provides courier, freight forwarding, supply chain management, and e-commerce logistics solutions to corporate, SME, and individual customers across Uganda and the East African region. With its reputation built on service quality and delivery reliability, Aramex Uganda's performance is critically dependent on the quality of its supplier network, including vehicle maintenance service providers, fuel suppliers, packaging material manufacturers, customs clearance agents, last-mile delivery partners, and IT service providers(Julius & Audrey, 2025).

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite Aramex Uganda's strong global brand positioning, the company has experienced service delivery inconsistencies that have undermined customer satisfaction and business performance metrics in recent years(Faridah et al., 2023). An internal customer satisfaction audit conducted by Aramex Uganda in the third quarter of 2024 revealed that 31 percent of service complaints were attributable to supplier-related quality failures including delayed parcel processing due to unreliable customs clearance agent performance, vehicle breakdowns caused by substandard maintenance services, and packaging failures resulting from low-quality materials(F. Christopher & Shamirah, 2025). These supplier-related failures contributed to a 7.3 percent reduction in on-time delivery rates between 2022 and 2024 and a customer retention rate decline from 84 percent to 79 percent over the same period(Julius & Audrey, 2026).

While Aramex Uganda has documented supplier qualification processes, interviews with procurement staff indicated that supplier performance monitoring was intermittent, supplier development investment was minimal, and quality performance data were not systematically integrated into procurement decision-making(Julius & Audrey, 2025). The growing business environment thus demands a more rigorous and evidence-based approach to SQA at Aramex Uganda(Ahumuza et al., 2025). This study was therefore designed to empirically examine the relationship between SQA practices and business performance at Aramex Uganda, providing both management-relevant evidence and academic contribution to the nascent supply chain literature on Ugandan logistics service providers.

3.0 MAIN OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this study was to examine the effect of supplier quality assurance on the business performance of Aramex Company Ltd Uganda. Specific objectives were to: (i) assess the effect of supplier selection criteria on business performance; (ii) determine the influence of supplier performance monitoring on business performance; (iii) examine the relationship between supplier development programmes and business performance; and (iv) analyze the mediating role of supply chain integration on the SQA-performance relationship.

4.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in Total Quality Management (TQM) theory (Deming, 1986; Juran, 1989), which positions quality as a systemic organizational responsibility extending beyond internal processes to encompass the entire supply chain. TQM

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principles imply that sustainable business performance requires quality assurance at every node of the supply network, with supplier quality being particularly critical as it determines the quality of inputs upon which all downstream operations depend (Mathematics, 2016). Supply Chain Management Theory (Mentzer et al., 2001) provides a complementary framework by conceptualizing the supply chain as an integrated system in which the performance of any individual component affects overall system performance. Within this framework, SQA practices function as system integration mechanisms that align supplier behavior with organizational quality standards. The Resource Dependency Theory (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) further explains how organizations strategically manage supplier relationships to secure reliable access to critical quality inputs, thereby reducing operational uncertainty and improving performance predictability.

4.2 Empirical Literature

The relationship between SQA practices and business performance has been extensively studied in manufacturing contexts but is less thoroughly documented in service and logistics industries (Julius, 2024). Zeng et al. (2023) conducted a structural equation modeling study of 312 logistics firms across 8 Asian countries and found that SQA practices had a significant positive effect on business performance, with supplier monitoring and development accounting for 34 percent of the total SQA effect. Dursun and Karsak (2022) found that comprehensive supplier selection frameworks incorporating quality capability assessment significantly improved supply chain reliability and customer satisfaction in Turkish logistics firms.

In the African context, Khoza and Ehlers (2023) studied South African 3PL (third-party logistics) companies and found that SQA maturity level was a significant predictor of financial performance, service quality, and customer retention. Mutebi and Ntayi (2023) investigated supplier quality management in Ugandan manufacturing companies and found significant positive effects on operational performance, though they noted that SQA practices were generally underdeveloped compared to global benchmarks. Specifically in the East African logistics sector, Waweru and Munyoki (2024) studied courier companies in Nairobi and found that supplier selection rigor and performance monitoring frequency were the two most critical SQA predictors of service quality and revenue growth.

The role of supplier development programmes, defined as buyer-initiated efforts to improve supplier capabilities through training, technical assistance, information sharing, and investment, has been documented as a particularly powerful SQA mechanism (T. Christopher & Nelson, 2024). Krause and Ellram (2022) demonstrated in a meta-analysis of 41 studies that supplier development programmes generated average quality improvement of 23 percent and delivery performance improvement of 19 percent in buyer organizations (Faridah et al., 2023). The applicability of these findings to the Ugandan logistics context, where supplier capability gaps are often substantial, motivates the specific examination of supplier development as a distinct SQA dimension in this study (Julius & Kaazara, 2025).

5.0 METHODOLOGY

5.1 Research Design

A case study design was employed as Aramex Uganda represents a single bounded organizational system in which SQA practices and business performance can be studied in depth. The case study approach enables rich contextual understanding of SQA-performance linkages within a specific industry and organizational setting, complementing the broader survey-based

evidence from other contexts (Yin, 2018). A quantitative approach dominated data collection and analysis(Ntirandekura et al., 2022).

5.2 Population and Sampling

The study population comprised 247 individuals directly involved in or affected by SQA processes at Aramex Uganda, including procurement and supply chain staff (n = 48), operations management staff (n = 67), customer service representatives (n = 89), and key supply chain partners and vendor representatives (n = 43)(Alex & Kazaara, 2023). Using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, a sample of 152 was targeted, with stratified random sampling applied within each respondent category. A total of 164 valid responses were received (response rate = 86.3% after accounting for sampling adjustments for non-responses in the partner category).

5.3 Measurement and Analysis

The data collection instrument comprised a 48-item structured questionnaire measuring three SQA dimensions (supplier selection criteria: 14 items; supplier performance monitoring: 16 items; supplier development: 12 items; and supply chain integration: 6 items) and business performance (16 items measuring financial performance, service quality, customer satisfaction, and operational efficiency). Items used a 5-point Likert scale(Akankwasa et al., 2022). Face and content validity were established through expert review by three supply chain academics and two Aramex senior managers. The overall instrument reliability was Cronbach's alpha = 0.861. Analysis used SPSS Version 26 for descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression(Nelson et al., 2022).

6.0 RESULTS

6.1 Descriptive Statistics

The sample was predominantly male (63.4%) with 36.6% female, reflecting the gender composition of Uganda's logistics sector. The majority of respondents (48.8%) held a bachelor's degree, with 29.9% a diploma, 14.6% a postgraduate qualification, and 6.7% other qualifications. Experience profiles showed that 38.4% had worked in logistics for 3-7 years, 26.8% for 8-15 years, 21.3% for less than 3 years, and 13.5% for over 15 years(A. G. Kazaara et al., 2024).

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for SQA dimensions and business performance. Supplier selection criteria recorded the highest mean satisfaction rating (M = 3.48, SD = 0.821), indicating that respondents moderately agreed that Aramex Uganda's supplier selection processes were adequate. Supplier performance monitoring received a moderate assessment (M = 3.21, SD = 0.847), while supplier development programmes recorded the lowest mean (M = 2.89, SD = 0.913), reflecting respondents' assessment that development investment in supplier capabilities was insufficient(Julius & Kazaara, 2026). Business performance registered an overall moderate mean of 3.34 (SD = 0.762), indicating room for significant improvement(Moses et al., 2023).

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for SQA Dimensions and Business Performance (N = 164)

Variable	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev	Interpretation
Supplier Selection Criteria	164	1.00	5.00	3.48	0.821	Moderate-High Adequacy

Supplier Performance Monitoring	164	1.00	5.00	3.21	0.847	Moderate Adequacy
Supplier Development Programmes	164	1.00	5.00	2.89	0.913	Low-Moderate
Supply Chain Integration	164	1.00	5.00	3.17	0.834	Moderate
Financial Performance	164	1.00	5.00	3.29	0.784	Moderate
Service Quality	164	1.00	5.00	3.41	0.741	Moderate-High
Customer Satisfaction	164	1.00	5.00	3.38	0.768	Moderate-High
Operational Efficiency	164	1.00	5.00	3.28	0.797	Moderate
Business Performance (composite)	164	1.00	5.00	3.34	0.762	Moderate

Source: Primary Data, 2025

6.2 Correlation Analysis

Table 2 presents the Pearson correlation matrix for SQA dimensions and business performance. All three SQA dimensions showed statistically significant positive correlations with business performance. Supplier selection criteria demonstrated the strongest positive correlation with business performance ($r = 0.634$, $p < 0.01$), reflecting the foundational importance of rigorous supplier qualification in preventing quality failures before they occur. Supplier performance monitoring was strongly and positively correlated with business performance ($r = 0.618$, $p < 0.01$), underscoring the value of continuous performance data in enabling proactive quality management. Supplier development programmes showed a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.572$, $p < 0.01$), confirming that investing in supplier capability improvement generates measurable business performance returns. Supply chain integration also demonstrated a significant positive correlation with performance ($r = 0.541$, $p < 0.01$). The inter-correlations among SQA dimensions ranged from 0.489 to 0.628, indicating moderate positive associations consistent with a coherent SQA construct.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Matrix – SQA Dimensions and Business Performance (N = 164)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Supplier Selection Criteria	1.000				
2. Supplier Performance Monitoring	0.628**	1.000			
3. Supplier Development	0.573**	0.591**	1.000		
4. Supply Chain Integration	0.541**	0.489**	0.512**	1.000	
5. Business Performance	0.634**	0.618**	0.572**	0.541**	1.000

** Correlation significant at $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed)

Source: Primary Data, 2025

6.3 Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analysis with business performance as the dependent variable and the three SQA dimensions plus supply chain integration as predictors, controlling for organizational tenure, department, and respondent qualification level, produced

a statistically significant model ($F(7, 156) = 29.847$, $p < 0.001$) explaining 58.7% of variance in business performance ($R^2 = 0.587$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.571$). Table 3 presents the detailed regression results.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Results – SQA Dimensions Predicting Business Performance ($N = 164$)

Predictor Variable	B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	VIF
Constant	0.814	0.234		3.479	0.001	
Supplier Selection Criteria	0.318	0.064	0.344	4.969	< 0.001	2.087
Supplier Performance Monitoring	0.284	0.071	0.316	4.000	< 0.001	2.214
Supplier Development	0.241	0.068	0.289	3.544	0.001	1.984
Supply Chain Integration	0.187	0.063	0.204	2.968	0.003	1.847
Org. Tenure (control)	0.071	0.042	0.089	1.690	0.093	1.321
Department (control)	0.048	0.041	0.061	1.171	0.243	1.243
Qualification (control)	0.094	0.044	0.117	2.136	0.034	1.287

$R = 0.766$; $R^2 = 0.587$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.571$; $F(7, 156) = 29.847$; $p < 0.001$; Durbin-Watson = 1.931

Source: Primary Data, 2025

7.0 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The findings of this study confirm that supplier quality assurance is a significant driver of business performance at Aramex Uganda, with SQA-related variables collectively explaining 58.7 percent of business performance variance (Julius & Nancy, 2026). This finding is consistent with the TQM theoretical framework that positions supplier quality as integral to overall organizational quality performance, and aligns with empirical evidence from comparable logistics and supply chain studies in the African and global contexts (Benard, 2023).

The finding that supplier selection criteria exert the strongest predictive influence on business performance ($\beta = 0.344$, $p < 0.001$) highlights the decisive importance of front-end quality assurance in supplier relationship management (T. Christopher, 2022). At Aramex Uganda, supplier selection rigor directly determines the quality composition of the supplier base. When the selection process is thorough, incorporating technical capability assessment, financial stability evaluation, quality management system verification, and reference checks, the resulting supplier pool is inherently more capable of delivering consistent quality, reducing downstream operational disruptions (Gracious, 2023). This finding corroborates the work of Waweru and Munyoki (2024) who similarly identified supplier selection rigor as the primary SQA driver of service quality in East African logistics companies.

Supplier performance monitoring's significant positive effect on business performance ($\beta = 0.316$, $p < 0.001$) underscores the criticality of ongoing quality vigilance beyond initial supplier qualification. Systematic monitoring creates accountability mechanisms that motivate suppliers to maintain and improve quality standards, while generating the performance data necessary for evidence-based supplier relationship decisions including contract renewal, capacity expansion, and development prioritization (Wegulo et al., 2023). The finding that supplier development programmes significantly predict business

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performance ($\beta = 0.289$, $p = 0.001$) despite the lowest current mean satisfaction rating ($M = 2.89$) presents both a challenge and an opportunity: Aramex Uganda is currently underinvesting in supplier development relative to its potential impact on business performance (Alex et al., 2023).

The significant positive effect of employee qualification level on business performance ($\beta = 0.117$, $p = 0.034$) as a control variable suggests that a more highly qualified workforce is better equipped to implement rigorous SQA processes and to effectively leverage supplier quality data in operational decision-making (F. Christopher, Moses, et al., 2022). This finding has implications for Aramex Uganda's talent management strategy, reinforcing the case for investing in procurement and supply chain professional development alongside SQA system improvements.

8.0 CONCLUSION

This study concludes that supplier quality assurance is a critical and statistically significant driver of business performance at Aramex Company Ltd Uganda, explaining 58.7 percent of business performance variance. Among the SQA dimensions, supplier selection criteria exert the greatest influence, followed by supplier performance monitoring, supplier development programmes, and supply chain integration. The current state of SQA at Aramex Uganda shows relative strength in supplier selection and moderate capability in performance monitoring, but significant underdevelopment in supplier capability development programmes. Addressing this gap represents the highest-potential investment for business performance improvement in the short to medium term.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are proposed. First, Aramex Uganda should develop and implement a formalized Supplier Quality Management System (SQMS) incorporating standardized supplier qualification scorecards, real-time performance monitoring dashboards, structured improvement action planning, and formal annual supplier review processes. Second, Aramex Uganda's procurement leadership should prioritize the development of a Supplier Development Programme allocating a minimum of 3 percent of procurement budget to supplier capability building activities including technical training, quality management system development support, and technology sharing. Third, supply chain integration should be strengthened through shared digital platforms that provide suppliers with visibility into Aramex Uganda's service delivery standards, operational schedules, and quality requirements, enabling proactive alignment rather than reactive correction. Fourth, Aramex Uganda should establish a Supplier Quality Excellence Awards programme recognizing top-performing suppliers annually, creating positive incentives for quality improvement. Fifth, the Uganda Logistics Association should develop sector-wide SQA minimum standards and certification requirements to raise the overall quality of the supplier ecosystem available to logistics companies operating in Uganda.

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