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Exploring the Effect of Knowledge and Leadership on Firm Performance in RMG Sector of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

The Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector is a cornerstone of Bangladesh's economy, contributing significantly to employment and export earnings. This study investigates the connection between Knowledge Management Practices (KMP), Transformational Leadership (TL), and Employee Learning Ability (ELA) in driving Firm Performance (FP) within the RMG industry. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), data from 145 RMG firms were analyzed to explore how KMP and TL influence FP, with ELA acting as a mediator. The findings reveal that KMP and TL significantly enhance FP, with ELA playing a significant mediating role. Specifically, KMP positively impacts FP and ELA, while TL directly boosts both FP and ELA. ELA, in turn, strongly influences FP, highlighting its role as a bridge between KMP, TL, and FP. These results align with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, emphasizing the strategic importance of internal resources like knowledge, leadership, and employee capabilities in achieving competitive advantage. The study underscores the need for RMG firms to invest in KMP and TL to adopt a culture of continuous learning and innovation, thereby enhancing organizational performance. By addressing gaps in existing literature, this research provides actionable insights for RMG firms aiming to navigate the challenges of a rapidly evolving global market.



Introduction

The Ready-Made-Garment (RMG) sector is the backbone of the national economy of Bangladesh because it contributes more than 84% to the country's total export earnings and employs over 4.2 million workers (BGMEA, 2023; World Bank, 2022). This industry has been acting as the driving force in the country's economic growth, poverty reduction, and employment opportunities for women's empowerment. However, under rapid technological changes and changing global market dynamics, the RMG industry is now facing serious challenges: it constantly has to be able to adjust to changing production technology, management practices, and consumer demands. Given such an environment, knowledge management that is, creation, sharing, distribution, and usage of knowledge has become a tool needed to ensure leaders surmount these challenges and stay competitive (Obseso et al., 2020; Truong et al., 2024).

Long considered one of the main causes of competitive advantage in the modern, knowledge-based economy, knowledge management (KM) is gaining notoriety. In the RMG industry, KM significantly improves the production process, fabric technology, design innovation, and supply chain management. Effective KM practices (KMP) enable organizations to enhance their capacity to better production capacity, cost cut, better quality products, and innovation as discussed by (Saha et al., 2024); Muzam et al., 2022). On top of that, transformational leadership (TL) has been documented as a significant factor in aligning KMP with organizational goals. In fact, TL supports the employees to share their knowledge, and it helps them create an environment whereby employees can easily implement KMP mechanisms for organizational success as supportive by (Behie et al., 2023 & Sánchez-García et al., 2024).

On the contrary, employees' learning ability (ELA) refers to the capability of the employees to absorb new knowledge and internalize it in a form that is applicable. In the RMG sector, ELA is crucial for adaptation to new production technologies, methods of quality control, and design concepts. The firms with higher ELA may respond quicker to changes in the industry, enhancing employee performance, which, in turn, would enhance overall firm performance (Nguyen et al., 2024; Moughari & Daim, 2023). Despite the ever-increasing appreciation of KMP and TL, little remains known about how exactly these aspects interact with the determination of performance at firm levels, especially for labor intensive sectors and the Bangladesh RMG industry. Furthermore, the mediating role of ELA in such a relationship also remains highly under examined.

Therefore, this study tries to fill these gaps by investigating the joint effect of KMP with TL in order to lead to firm performance (FP) within the Bangladesh RMG sector, with an explicit desire to analyze the mediating role of ELA. Although the business relationship between KMP and FP has been addressed in some sections of manufacturing and high-tech industries, most of the labor intensive sectors, like the RMG industry, have not been touched on. Also, how the TL factor shapes the KMP and engenders the success of the firm is not clearly identified. This paper, therefore, seeks to present actionable insights helpful for RMG firms in their quest to be more competitive in the global market through an analysis of these relationships. The following research questions are discussed in this article.

RQ1: *What effect does knowledge management and transformational leadership have on the performance of a firm in Bangladesh's RMG sector?*

RQ2: *How does employee learning ability mediate the relationship between knowledge management, transformational leadership, and firm performance?*

The paper is organized in such a way that it covers a literature review of KMP, TL, ELA, and FP in Section 2; Section 3 covers the methodology; Section 4 discusses data analysis; Sections 5 and 6 presents discussion and implications; Section 7 presents the conclusion, recommendations, limitations, and avenues for future research.

Theoretical Literature and Hypothesis Development

Most past KM and organizational performance related studies have concentrated on the manufacturing industry, usually neglecting the peculiar dynamics inherent in the labor intensive sectors such as that of RMG. This study purports to widen the scope of existing literature through an investigation of the inter relationships between KMP, TL, and FP within the RMG sector in Bangladesh. These relationships are complex and multifaceted, highlighting both challenges and opportunities for the industry. Theoretical frameworks, such as the Resource-Based View (RBV), provide a robust foundation for analyzing these dynamics. RBV posits that a firm's internal resources such as knowledge, skills, and capabilities are critical for achieving sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). In the context of the RMG sector, advanced techniques of garment making, sustainable sourcing of fabrics, and the ability to predict global fashion trends are valuable resources that can drive performance when well managed. In fact, according to (Siddik et al., 2023), such valuable resources can enable business performance. Knowledge is widely regarded as a strategic resource; effective KMP, when aligned with TL, create a robust knowledge base that improves FP. TL is an inspiring and motivating approach that has been discussed by (Arshad et al., 2023 & Gui et al., 2024) to be critical in creating a culture of knowledge sharing and innovation. This approach pushes employees beyond their self-interests toward the realization of organizational goals, hence making KMP more effective. For example, TL encourage open communication, collaboration, and continuous learning-leading factors of knowledge creation and distribution processes (Srisathan et al., 2023). In the RMG sector, with its imperative for rapid adaptation to market trends and technology development, TL may significantly enhance FP by utilizing KMP. While there is available literature on how KMP and leadership styles lead to FP in the greater manufacturing industry (Pellegrini et al., 2020; Berraies & Zine El Abidine, 2019), there is a significant deficiency in prior studies focusing on the RMG sector. This study tries to fill this gap by providing a refined view beyond FP alone, analyzing how KMP and TL together influence organizational success. In this context, the mediating role of ELA becomes very important. ELA refers to employees' capacity to acquire, assimilate, and apply new knowledge, which is critical for adapting to changes in production technology, quality control methods, and design concepts (Nguyen et al., 2024). Employees with strong learning abilities are better equipped to utilize the firm's knowledge resources, leading to innovations in products and processes that enhance overall performance (Perez et al., 2023). RBV theory further reiterates that in order to achieve a competitive advantage, resources have to be valuable, rare, and not substitutable. It is in regard to such resource identification, acquisition, and organizing that TL plays a very important role in the RMG industry, as mentioned by (Rana & Youn 2024). For example, leaders who focus on employee development and knowledge-sharing capabilities enhance innovative firm capabilities with a view to responding to the demands of the market. Moreover, the interaction effect between KM practices and transformational leadership is moderated by ELA because of the employee's capability in learning and using new knowledge may directly affect a firm's capability in using the resources effectively.

KMP and FP

KMP are critical drivers of FP, particularly in competitive industries like the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector (Farooq et al., 2022). KMP includes knowledge acquisition, sharing,

application, and retention, which enhance organizational capabilities, stimulate innovation, and improve performance. Effective KMP enables firms to leverage intellectual resources for efficiency, product development, and sustainable competitive advantages. This becomes particularly significant in the RMG sector, where quick technological changes and shifting consumer demand compel firms to remain competitive via innovation and operational efficiency, combined with continuous learning (Hair et al., 2019; Akgün et al., 2023). KMP enables innovative factors that drive prosperity in the RMG industry. In this regard, RMG firms can respond quickly to market demands and consumer preferences by keeping updated on advanced techniques of production, sustainable sourcing, and global fashion trends. Agility is realized through effective resource utilization, better decision-making, and operational efficiency. Further, KMP has a significant bearing on employee learning and development by fostering a culture of knowledge sharing and continuous improvement. Employees, as key creators and users of knowledge, benefit from enhanced learning capabilities, which translate into better task performance and organizational outcomes (Saha et al., 2023). Empirical evidence supports the positive impact of KMP on FP, particularly in manufacturing industries. Studies highlight that knowledge acquisition and sharing enhance innovation, decision-making, and operational efficiency (Chaithanapat et al., 2022). Employee learning ability partially mediates the relationship between KMP and FP, putting a pendulum on absorptive and application capabilities (Akgün et al., 2023). It is imperative that investment in KMP infrastructures, such as knowledge-sharing platforms, training, and cross-functional collaboration, be chosen for the RMG sector of Bangladesh to ensure the continuance of competitiveness and long-term success amidst technological disruptions and global competition (Arsawan et al., 2022). Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis can be proposed for the study.

H1: The knowledge management practices are positively contributing to firm performance in the RMG sector.

TL and FP

TL has become vital in those industries where competitiveness and innovation are the prime issues, such as in the RMG sector. TL influences subordinates to be motivated toward a vision, innovatively solve problems, and align personal goals with organizational objectives (Gui et al., 2024; Srisathan et al., 2023). Within today's fast changing RMG arena, TL boosts competitiveness and paves the road for a strategic culture. Accordingly, it supports firms to manage changes in today's fashion directions and market fluctuation (Arshad et al., 2023). TL is based on vision, communication, and influencing subordinates with inspiration to contribute towards the organization's success in the long term. This dimension becomes highly crucial in the RMG sector since agility and adaptability are warranted to respond promptly to rapid shifts in consumer tastes and global developments. Intellectual stimulation is another vital dimension of TL that encourages critical thinking among the subordinates to question established ways of doing things and accept innovative solutions. This fosters a culture of innovation and problem-solving, leading to improved product design, production efficiency, and operational effectiveness (Bala et al., 2023). Another critical dimension of TL is individualized consideration, where leaders address the unique needs and growth of each employee. This is especially beneficial in the labor-intensive RMG industry, as mentorship and professional development enhance employee satisfaction, motivation, and performance (Behie et al., 2023; Perez et al., 2023). TL also boosts employee engagement, fostering collaboration, continuous learning, and job satisfaction, which are essential for organizational success (Hossain et al., 2022; Tareque & Islam, 2023). Additionally, TL also pays attention to KMP via knowledge-sharing culture and teamwork practices. The leaders inspire the

employees to share their ideas and expertise in order for firms to use internal knowledge in improving operations, product quality, and innovation. In the competitive RMG industry, timely KMP supported by TL enhances decision-making and adaptability (Jensen et al., 2020). In short, TL is one of the critical determinants of Firm Performance in the RMG industry. Transformational leaders develop innovation, continuous improvement, and knowledge-sharing culture that helps any organization survive and grow in global competitiveness. Conclusion The above discussion was supported by (Idrees et al., 2023 & Akgün et al., 2023). Thus, the hypothesis is

H2: Transformational leadership has a positive impact on firm performance in the RMG sector.

Mediating role of ELA

The literature on ELA and FP highlights the critical link between human capital development and organizational success (Ameyaw et al., 2019). Employees with high ELA are better equipped to adapt to challenges, innovate, and contribute to organizational goals (Tang et al., 2019). Studies confirm that organizations fostering continuous learning and knowledge sharing outperform their peers (Ciarli et al., 2021). ELA enhances decision-making, problem-solving, and adaptability, making it a valuable asset for organizational competitiveness (Do & Mai, 2021). In high-velocity industries like the Ready-Made Garment (RMG) sector, ELA is crucial for maintaining a competitive edge (Xanthopoulou et al., 2023). However, research on ELA and FP has predominantly focused on high-tech and manufacturing sectors in developed economies, leaving labor-intensive industries like RMG in developing countries like Bangladesh underexplored. This, therefore, creates a gap, especially regarding context-specific research that will explain how ELA influences FP in the RMG sector since it is so labour-intensive, with global competition and fast market changes. Thus, the following hypothesis has been proposed in the study:

H3: Employee learning ability has a positive influence on firm performance in the RMG sector.

Employee productivity is of vital importance regarding innovation, competitiveness, as well as sustainable growth. KMP enhance employee capabilities by fostering learning and granting competitive advantages (Khoreva & Wechtler, 2018). In Bangladesh's RMG sector, effective KMP involves robust information systems, shared objectives, and organizational procedures to facilitate knowledge creation, dissemination, and utilization (Tortorella et al., 2019). The sector's rapid evolution demands a workforce skilled in technical aspects and adaptable to market dynamics and technological advancements (Rahman et al., 2024). Firms with effective KMP experience improved knowledge flow and retention, empowering employees to enhance their ELA (Hossain et al., 2022). Thus, the symbiotic relationship between KMP and ELA is critical for improving FP in the RMG sector. This study hypothesizes:

H4: Knowledge management practices have a positive effect on employees' learning ability in the RMG sector.

H5: Employees' learning ability mediates the positive relationship between knowledge management practices and firm performance in the RMG sector.

Effective leadership is a major driver of FP, productivity, environmental concern, and workplace well-being. To achieve organizational success, leaders have to develop dynamic capabilities through employee engagement (Contreras et al., 2020). Leadership positively

influences employees' innovative work behavior, motivation to acquire new skills, and fosters an innovation-supportive environment (Afsar & Umrani, 2020). TL has a positive effect on employee retention, burnout reduction, and increased motivation and creativity, which are required in the development of sustainable products and services, as identified by (Parveen & Adeinat, 2019; Asghar et al., 2022; Li et al., 2020). The motivation driven by the leadership further increases ELA within firms, as mentioned by (Rizki et al., 2019). Thus, this study hypothesizes that:

H6: There is a significant positive effect of leadership on employees' learning ability.

H7: Employees' learning ability mediates the relationship between leadership and firm performance in the RMG sector

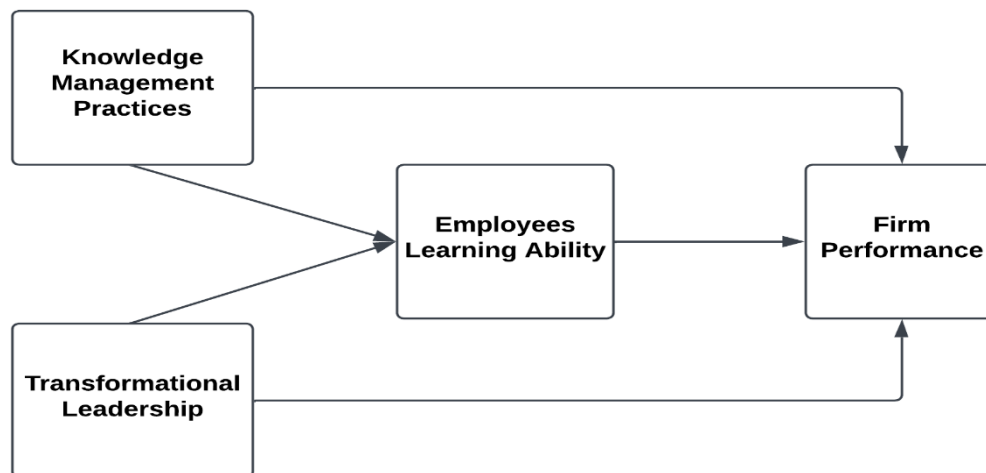


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Methodology

Measurement items and questionnaire Development

In the present study, the questionnaire was adapted from various established literature-validated measurement items with the purpose of making them fitting within the operational context of Ready Garment Firm 145. Concretely, the following have been considered in the survey:

Variable	Questions	Reference
Knowledge Management Practices	Seven items	Souza et al., 2016, Abbas et al., 2020
transformational leadership	Six items	Battisti et al., 2022
Employee Learning Behavior	Five items	Butt et al., 2022
Firm Performance	Six items	Bagga et al., 2023

The instrument was critically reviewed for content validity and contextual relevance. This surveying questionnaire has been critically reviewed by two academic professors and two industry experts regarding clarity, relevance, and appropriateness for the dynamics of the particular industry. It was then pre-tested on a group of 40 professionals in the garment manufacturing industry for reliability and phrasing. The result from the pilot test had minor wordings and structural adjustments before the final data collection.

Data Collection

The data collection took place from May 2024 to November 2024, in which a total of 550 questionnaires were forwarded to employees from 145 small, medium-sized, and large garment firms situated in major industrial clusters in Bangladesh, such as Dhaka, Chittagong, Gazipur, and Narayanganj. These areas are highly concentrated with firms that are affiliated with the most prominent associations, such as the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association and the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association. Data collection was done using a mixed-mode approach, combining electronic surveys via email with hard copies delivered during physical visits to the firm sites. The targeted respondents in the questionnaire were employees at all levels, from operational to supervisory and managerial. Of the 550 questionnaires distributed, a total of 388 responses were actually received, with an overall response rate of about 70.5%. After data screening, 357 responses were retained as complete and usable, while 31 responses were incomplete or inconsistent and discarded. This dataset provides valuable insights into employee perceptions of organizational practices during the study period. The research design thus realizes the limitation of the non-probability convenience sampling method in introducing selection biases and underrepresentation of some sections of the workforce, which may limit generalization. Thus, the sample may not be representative of views from the whole workforce in the 145 garment firms. Demographic details are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Results

Demographic Category	Subcategory	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	200	56.0%
	Female	157	44.0%
Firm Size	Small	120	33.6%
	Medium	150	42.0%
	Large	87	24.4%
Education	Non-Technical	186	52.1%
	Technical	171	47.9%
Experience	3 Years	100	28.0%
	5 Years	187	52.4%
	More than 10 Years	70	19.6%

Common Method Bias

CMB was examined in the present study following the recommendation by Khoreva and Wechtler (2018) that used Harman's single-factor test. An exploratory factor analysis was undertaken according to this method to see whether a single factor accounts for the majority of the variance; this threshold should generally not exceed 50%, after which one would expect there is an indication of CMB. However, according to (Spector et al., 2019), because the single common factor accounted for 38.33% of the total variance, CMB is unlikely to have unduly influenced the results of this analysis. However, the single-factor test of Harman is merely a preliminary check; it cannot be used to rule out completely the presence of method bias. The above results could be made more robust by using additional statistical techniques, such as the marker variable approach or including a latent common method factor in SEM (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Such would give further validation to the findings and reduce concern about biases associated with self-report data.

Analysis

In analyzing our latent variable model, we utilized Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) because of its flexibility and robustness, especially when handling complex models and smaller data sets. PLS-SEM enables the confirmatory and structural analyses to be executed simultaneously, thus distinguishing between the measurement model, which validates the theoretical constructs, and the structural model, which tests the hypothesized relationships between latent variables (Hair et al., 2019). This method is particularly suitable for theory development, exploratory research, and situations where data do not meet the normality assumptions required by other SEM techniques, such as covariance-based SEM (CB-SEM). This analysis has been done by means of SmartPLS 4, a world-recognized PLS-SEM software that includes strong capabilities for model specification, estimation, and evaluation. With the help of SmartPLS 4, both the measurement model could be comprehensively tested and visualized. Inasmuch as PLS-SEM is particularly effective for exploratory research and the development of theory with smaller samples, such limitations must be borne in mind when interpreting these results.

Measurement Model Assessment

It had to be determined whether the measurement model satisfied reliability, validity, and robustness regarding the conceptual framework of the latent variables and constructs and respective indicators. These are some criteria for validation, such as Indicator loadings (*Ca*), Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). All indicator loadings were higher than 0.70; thus, these were good for the relationships of indicators with their respective constructs. While all the Composite Reliability scores have outperformed 0.70, constructs were internally reliable; AVE values were over 0.50, so each construct reflected a substantial variance in its respective indicators, reflecting adequate convergent validity. Accordingly, as proposed by (Hair et al., 2019), all estimates showed the established threshold values, depicted in Table 2, ensuring that the measurement model was good to go for the subsequent analysis of the structure. Besides, VIF values were checked for multicollinearity issues; all of them were below the conservative threshold of 5, hence confirming that predictor variables are independent. In summary, these findings confirm that the measurement model is reliable, convergent validity, and no multicollinearity issues, thus being appropriate to test hypotheses in the structural model.

Table 2: Results of Factor Loadings, *Ca*, *CR*, and *AVE*

Variable	Items	Loadings	VIF	Ca	CR	AVE
Knowledge Management Practices	KMP1	0.696	1.631	0.853	0.888	0.531
	KMP2	0.718	1.458			
	KMP3	0.736	1.725			
	KMP4	0.766	1.929			
	KMP5	0.720	1.662			
	KMP6	0.710	1.856			
	KMP7	0.753	1.934			
Transformational Leadership	TL1	0.826	1.718	0.859	0.895	0.588
	TL2	0.764	1.891			
	TL3	0.762	2.350			
	TL4	0.725	1.904			
	TL5	0.783	1.576			
	TL6	0.737	1.641			

Employees Learning Ability	ELA1	0.765	1.660	0.822	0.875	0.584
	ELA2	0.721	1.748			
	ELA3	0.784	1.605			
	ELA4	0.797	1.676			
	ELA5	0.751	1.810			
Firm Performance	FP1	0.762	2.164	0.865	0.899	0.599
	FP2	0.774	1.802			
	FP3	0.736	1.753			
	FP4	0.746	1.592			
	FP5	0.823	1.860			
	FP6	0.797	1.701			

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker criterion

Constructs	KM	TL	ELA	FP
KM	0.729	-	-	-
TL	0.690	0.767	-	-
ELA	0.674	0.763	0.764	-
FP	0.595	0.724	0.524	0.774

Table 4: HTMT ratio R^2 and Adj. R^2

Constructs	KM	TL	ELA	FP	R^2	Adj. R^2
KM	-	-	-	-	-	-
TL	0.735	-	-	-	-	-
ELA	0.621	0.685	-	-	0.676	0.674
FP	0.644	0.682	0.759	-	0.694	0.691

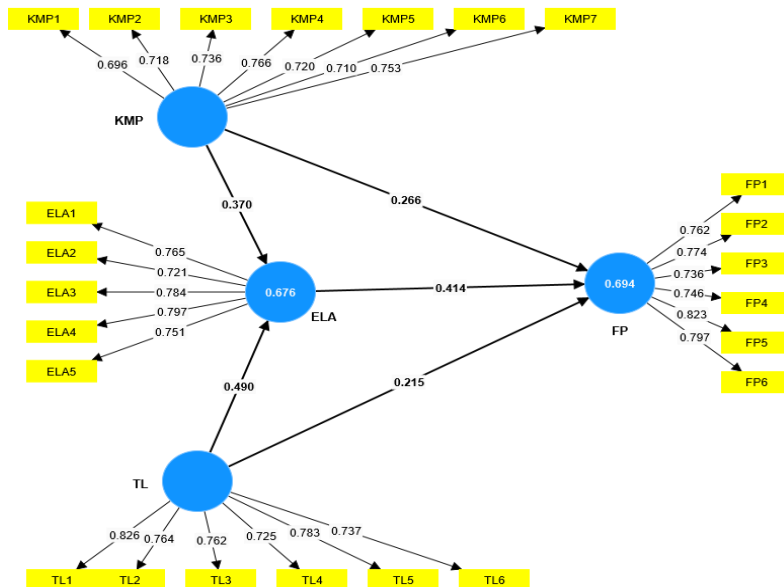


Figure 2: Measurement Model

Table 3 and 4 show Fornell-Larcker criterion, HTMT ratios, R^2 and Adj. R^2 giving regard to the relationships of the constructs in our measurement model. The so-called HTMT criterion, as introduced by (Henseler et al., 2015), views discriminant validity with

respect to whether constructs are different enough from other constructs. Commonly, HTMT values below 0.85 or 0.90 have been considered indicative of acceptable discriminant validity. As the results indicate, all HTMT values are well below these thresholds. This indicates that constructs like KMP, TL, ELA, and FP are effectively distinguishable in the model. It thus indicates that a certain construct measures a unique aspect of the conceptual framework, which reinforces the model's validity to ensure integrity in an analysis due to overlapping constructs.

Structural Model Assessment

In this structural model, the relationships of causality for latent variables will be assessed, especially direct and mediating effects of KMP and TL on FP through ELB. Estimation of path coefficients in PLS-SEM was obtained with 5,000 bootstrap subsamples; statistical significance testing was based on t-statistics and p-values. Results indicate that KMP is significantly and positively affecting FP with a β -value of 0.266, having a t-value of 3.972 and a p-value < 0.001 , thus supporting recent studies highlighting the role of KMP towards FP about (Aldhaheri & Ahmad, 2024). TL also significantly and positively influences FP, having a β -value of 0.215 with a t-value of 3.034 and a p-value of 0.001, hence reifying well-recognized theories about leader-driven performance consequences by (Bass & Riggio, 2022). Most of all, the strongest direct influence of all on FP comes from ELB, $\beta = 0.414$, $t = 6.695$, $p < 0.001$, confirming studies conducted about learning cultures and operational efficiency by (Zhang et al., 2023). Moreover, KMP significantly improves ELB, $\beta = 0.370$, $t = 5.482$, $p < 0.001$, while TL is a strong predictor of ELB, $\beta = 0.490$, $t = 7.465$, $p < 0.001$, underlining the role of leadership in enhancing the skill development and creativity of employees (Bass & Riggio, 2022). The indirect effect of KMP on FP via ELB is statistically significant, $\beta = 0.153$, $t = 4.038$, and $p < 0.001$, which confirms the mediating role of ELB, as hypothesized by previous studies (Yuan & Zhang, 2022).

Table 5: Structural Model Assessment

Hypothesis	Relation	β	σ	t_c	P_{value}	Decision
Direct						
H1	KMP $\rightarrow$ FP	0.266	0.067	3.972	0.000	Accepted
H2	TL $\rightarrow$ FP	0.215	0.071	3.034	0.001	Accepted
H3	ELA $\rightarrow$ FP	0.414	0.062	6.695	0.000	Accepted
H4	KMP $\rightarrow$ ELA	0.370	0.067	5.482	0.000	Accepted
H5	TL $\rightarrow$ ELA	0.490	0.066	7.465	0.000	Accepted
Mediating						
H6	KMP $\rightarrow$ ELA $\rightarrow$ FP	0.153	0.038	4.038	0.000	Accepted
H7	TL $\rightarrow$ ELA $\rightarrow$ FP	0.203	0.039	5.216	0.000	Accepted

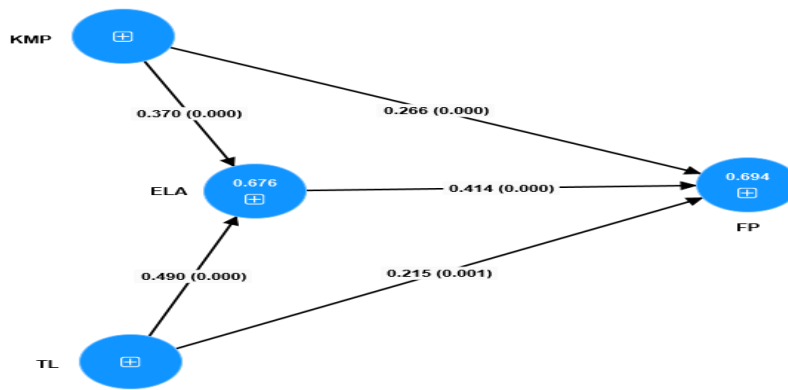


Figure 3: Structural Model

Discussion

The findings confirm that KMP and TL strongly and positively contribute to FP of Bangladeshi RMG firms through an important mediator: ELA. This emphasizes a fact that through KMPs and TL, organizational capabilities become stronger, eventually leading to good performance outcomes. These findings are supplemented by the RBV, which states that the leadership and employee resources would, therefore, become the greatest resources in any knowledge-intensive industries such as RMG. Evidence from Siddik et al. (2023) and (Perez et al., 2023) also suggests that.

The first research question of the study looked at the direct effects of KMP and TL on FP. The authors proved that both KMP and TL significantly lead to enhanced FP; therefore, they are an important determinant in organizational performance. KMP improves employee capacity to make effective decisions and innovate, thus driving performance outcome. It corroborates the extant literature (Zhou et al., 2021 & Akgün et al., 2023), although the study has indicated a direct and meaningful relationship between KMP and FP in the context of the Bangladesh RMG sector. In addition, TL has a strong influence on both employee capabilities and FP. The leaders keep employees motivated to align their effort with organizational objectives, thereby uplifting their skill and improving FP. This dual impact of TL is further reaffirmed by (Jensen et al., 2020 & Tareque and Islam 2023), thus firmly placing TL among organizational strategic resources.

The second research question explored the role of ELA as a mediator between the association of KMP and TL with FP. The findings indicate that there exists a significant association wherein KMP and TL increase ELA and ELA significantly leads to the improvement in FP. While the impact of KMP and FP is direct, they have a greater influence through the development of employee capability. TL also has a direct effect on FP but the strength of the impact flows to strengthening ELA, showing that leadership is integral in the building of employee competencies. The mediating effect of ELA is strongest in the relationship between KMP and FP, supporting that learning and development is the essential link between knowledge management and organizational outcomes.

Research Implications

We have obtained a great deal of theoretical and practical understanding from the study inspecting the dynamics of KMP, TL, ELA and FP in RMG sector dynamics in Bangladesh. Because they focus on the crucial role that internal resources like KMP procedures and leadership qualities play in creating competitive advantages, the results

are compatible with the RBV. This simply fits in with RBV's claim that unique firm's resources are significant forces behind competitive success, focusing the strategic significance of these internal resources. Establishing this theory, findings of the study also showcases that knowledge alone isn't sufficient; its effective utilization via the learning capabilities of the workforce, spurred by leadership, is what truly unlocks its value for competitive advantage in the RMG firms and other manufacturing industries.

The results underscore the reciprocal connection within the organizational context, where investments in KMP and TL lead to enhanced employee capacities, contributing to increased FP. For RMG firms, the implications are far reaching. Management should invest in leadership development programs that foster TL skills. This includes training leaders to communicate knowledge effectively, recognize employees' learning needs, and create platforms for continuous learning like in-house training workshops, mentorship programs, and digital learning portals. Firms must also design recruitment and retention strategies that target employees with higher learning abilities, perhaps through skills assessment during hiring and offering incentives for upskilling. In the Bangladeshi RMG firm as a whole, policymakers and industry associations can use these findings to design sector-wide initiatives. For example, creating knowledge-sharing platforms where best practices and new trends can be disseminated across firms, and organizing training programs to enhance the learning capabilities of the workforce at large, especially considering the sector's predominantly young and trainable workforce.

Conclusion

This study, rooting around the interplay of KMP, TL, ELA, and FP in the RMG sector of Bangladesh, shows critical insights rooted in accepted management theory. The positive impacts of KMP on FP strongly matches with the RBV theory, showing the strategic significance of internal resources. This result underscores the role of KMP operations in manufacturing a skilled and agile workforce, aligning with RBV's notion that unique organizational resources are key drivers of competitive advantage. Moreover, the study broadens past literatures by predicting the dual impact of TL on both ELA and FP. This emphasizes that effective leadership, extending beyond traditional managerial functions, have a principle role in predicting an inspired and competent workforce, directly contributing to FP. This aligns with the core tenets of RBV theory partially, highlighting the transformative role of leadership on employees learning resource for competitive advantage of organizational success. The recognition of the mediating role of ELA reciprocal connection within the organizational context, wherein investments in KMP and TL practices lead to bettered employee capacities, contributing to increased FP. Besides, by emphasizing the critical mediating role of ELA, it highlights the importance of developing both organizational leaders and employees to navigate the challenges of a highly competitive global industry. In winding up, this study's insights, grounded in RBV theory and established literatures, furnish a comprehensive understanding of how KMP, TL, ELA, and FP interact within the RMG sector. By aligning with these established theories, the study accords not only to academic discourse but also offers practical suggestions for strategic management within the RMG industry.

Limitation and Future Suggestion

The study on achieving FP through knowledge, leadership, and the mediating role of ELA in the RMG sector of Bangladesh has several limitations. Initially, the data collection might have been

subject to biases. The sample of firms studied might not be fully representative of the entire RMG sector in Bangladesh. There could be differences between large and small firms, those with different ownership structures, or those located in different industrial zones that were not adequately captured. Secondly, the measurement of variables such as knowledge, leadership, and learning ability may have been imperfect. The proxies used to quantify these complex constructs might not have fully captured their essence. For example, leadership was perhaps evaluated through a limited set of indicators that might not account for different leadership styles that could impact FP in diverse ways. Moreover, the cross-sectional nature of the study restricts our ability to establish causal relationships. It is possible that there are reciprocal relationships among the variables that were not explored. For instance, FP might also influence the leadership approach or the investment in knowledge creation over time.

For further research, longitudinal studies are needed to better understand the causal dynamics among knowledge, leadership, employees' learning ability, and FP. This would involve tracking firms over an extended period to observe how changes in one variable affect the others over time. Expanding the scope of the study to include more qualitative research methods could provide deeper insights. Interviews with managers, employees, and industry experts could uncover nuances in the RMG sector's operations. For example, understanding how cultural factors within the Bangladeshi context influence leadership styles and the way knowledge is shared and absorbed by employees. Another area of future research could be to explore the impact of external factors such as global market trends, changes in trade policies, and technological advancements on the relationship between these internal firm-related variables. For instance, how the adoption of new digital technologies in the RMG sector might modify the role of leadership in facilitating knowledge transfer and enhancing employees' learning ability for better FP.

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