

FRAMEWORK OF LEAN MANUFACTURING IMPLEMENTATION
FOR WOOD AND FURNITURE INDUSTRY IN MALAYSIA

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements for the award of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

School of Mechanical Engineering
Faculty of Engineering
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

SEPTEMBER 2020

DEDICATION

To my parents, Abu Not and Rohani Harun,
They give birth to me, raised me, supported me, taught me and loved me.
I could not have done this without their support.
To them I dedicate this book.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

In the name of Allah the Most Gracious, the most Merciful.

This journey of mine has been enriched by many. First of all, I would like to give my sincerest thanks to my supervisors Prof. Dr. Muhamad Zameri Mat Saman and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Norhayati Zakuan for their enthusiasm, patience, encouragement and support that have kept me on the right track with high spirits.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to Dr. Hamed Gholami. I have learned so much from you over the years about how to review and write high impact articles, and how to go about my PhD journey. You have provided so much support that I could never have imagined from a student-mentor relationship. Special thanks to Ainul Basirah Othman for always being there whenever I needed you.

I am specifically indebted to the organization that had provided access to its production line as well as limited access to its confidential databases and successfully validated the proposed models. My special thanks go out to Muhammad Wafiq Khairul Anuar of Ruang Idea Kreatif Sdn Bhd who had made this facility available for me.

I want to thank all lean consultants and experts who had shared their time and knowledge throughout the lean initiative programs that I had carried out during the early stages of my work: Muhar Murad, executive director and principal consultant of Lean Management Academy Sdn Bhd; Loke Yoon Foo @ Eric Foo, 2017 GMP-5S lean consultant; Ch'ng Chin Leng and Lee Soo Lee, 2018 LMP lean consultants.

To all experts and practitioners namely Prof. Dr. Sulaiman Hasan, UTHM; Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mohd Nizam Ab Rahman, UKM; Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mohd Ariff Jamaludin, UiTM; Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zamalia Mahmud, UiTM; Dr. Noor Zuraida Jusoh, Certified Timber & Credible Suppliers Sdn Bhd, and Suhaimi Saad, CEO Furniture Industry Technology Centre (FITEC) Sdn Bhd. Thanks for the wealth of knowledge and experience that you have shared with me.

Without the generous financial assistance provided by Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam and the financial support from the Ministry of Higher Education under the Latihan Akademik Bumiputra (SLAB), I would not have been able to undertake this postgraduate research. Appreciation also goes out to the Research Management Centre (RMC) at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) for the support and funding of this research under the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS), Vot No. R.J.130000.7809.4F935.

Finally, I must express my gratitude to several of my family members who in different and most honourable ways have contributed to this effort. Mom and Dad for always being so solid and supportive of everything I have ever attempted. My mother and father-in-law for caring and giving so much love to my children throughout the first eighteen months. To my beloved children Hana, Hud, Zara and Zulfa; I love you all so much. Most importantly, I would like to thank my wonderful wife, my companion, the love of my life, Norzariza Idris, who has been patient, supportive, and very understanding throughout the course of me completing this research. Thanks for vigorously encouraging this venture despite the additional burden that my absence from home has put on your shoulders.

Without the help of many family members, colleagues, friends, UiTM faculty members, and UTM staff members, this monumental task would not have been possible.

ABSTRACT

Although research on the adoption of lean manufacturing (LM) in the furniture industry in emerging economies is slowly progressing, its urgent implementation has been emphasized by researchers and practitioners. Research on this aspect is therefore limited, particularly when compared to the vast amount of scholarly studies on the successful implementation of lean in developed countries. To support the narrow body of knowledge for this under-researched scope, this study presents the current shortfalls of implementing LM in terms of motives, barriers, challenges, and applications. More significantly, this research develops a framework to facilitate LM implementation in the Malaysian wood and furniture industry. In doing so, a methodological approach was implemented in four tiers. Firstly, a comprehensive review of contemporary literature was performed to assess the issues. Due to lack of information regarding lean tools adopted by the wood and furniture industry, the selection of LM practices was made based on research on the wood industry and validated by two responsible lean consultants appointed by the Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB) for the Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP-5S) and Lean Management Program (LMP). Secondly, a pilot study on 148 wood and furniture SME companies in Kuala Lumpur and Selangor was carried out to improve the survey instrument. Thirdly, an actual survey to test the questionnaire was also conducted after the initial reliability and validity of the measurement scales had been determined. Focusing on investigations into 599 wood and furniture companies in Malaysia, the status of LM implementation (i.e. awareness, level and duration of lean implementation) was examined and the two context factors (i.e. company size and ownership) that influence the implementation of lean practices were investigated. Then, the barriers for implementing lean and the challenges while implementing lean on knowledge (KNW), resources (RES) and culture and human attitudinal issues (CUL) were verified using the partial least squares-structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). The findings found that there is a notable lack of research and publications on LM in the wood and furniture industry. Based on the current situation, the status of lean implementation is not promising and can be considered as earlier implementation (started phase) based on three main reasons. Firstly, the 5S is the only lean tool implemented massively by companies; secondly, over half of the lean companies had only practiced lean for less than 2 years; and thirdly, more than half of the companies with some implementation agreed with the lean expertise constraint hinders companies from implementing lean practices extensively. The findings found that there is no relationship between LM practices with plant size and company ownership. Both lean and non-lean companies have different viewpoints on the issue of culture reluctance and financial constraints. Furthermore, the findings indicate that CUL, KNW and RES are positively and significantly related to the barriers and challenges in implementing lean. Thus, the aims are to strengthen the KNW, CUL and RES factors by providing educational support in the form of training sessions, site visits, workshops, and counselling. Finally, valid empirical evidence for the under-studied context of the Malaysian wood and furniture industry was provided and a novel 'LM implementation framework' to guide SMEs to successfully adopt LM practices was presented.

ABSTRAK

Walaupun penyelidikan mengenai pembuatan *lean* (LM) dalam industri perabot di negara-negara membangun sedang berkembang dengan perlahan, pelaksanaan segeranya telah ditekankan oleh para penyelidik dan pengamal. Oleh itu, kajian ke atas aspek ini adalah sangat terhad terutamanya jika dibandingkan dengan kajian akademik mengenai kejayaan pelaksanaan *lean* di negara-negara maju. Bagi menyokong badan pengetahuan yang terhad bagi aspek yang kurang diselidiki, kajian ini membentangkan kekurangan pelaksanaan LM dari segi motif, halangan, cabaran, dan aplikasi. Lebih penting, penyelidikan ini membangunkan satu rangka kerja yang memudahkan pelaksanaan LM di dalam industri perkayuan dan perabot di Malaysia. Justeru, satu pendekatan metodologikal telah dilaksanakan dalam empat peringkat. Pertama, satu kajian literatur kontemporari yang komprehensif dijalankan bagi menilai isu-isu berkaitan. Berikutan kekurangan maklumat mengenai alat-alat *lean* yang digunapakai oleh industri perkayuan dan perabot, pemilihan amalan-amalan LM dilakukan berdasarkan penyelidikan ke atas industri perkayuan dan disahkan oleh dua perunding *lean* yang dilantik oleh Lembaga Perindustrian Kayu Malaysia (MTIB) untuk Amalan Pembuatan Terbaik (GMP-5S) dan Program Pengurusan *Lean* (LMP). Kedua, satu kajian pandu ke atas 148 syarikat SME perkayuan dan perabot di sekitar Kuala Lumpur dan Selangor dijalankan bagi memperbaiki instrumen kaji selidik. Ketiga, satu kaji selidik sebenar bagi menguji borang kaji selidik turut dijalankan selepas keboleharapan dan kesahan awal skala pengukuran ditentukan. Menerusi kajian ke atas 599 syarikat perkayuan dan perabot di Malaysia, status pelaksanaan LM (iaitu kesedaran, tahap dan tempoh pelaksanaan *lean*) dikaji dan dua faktor konteks (saiz syarikat dan pemilikan) yang mempengaruhi pelaksanaan amalan-amalan *lean* dikaji. Seterusnya, halangan dalam melaksanakan *lean* dan cabaran semasa melaksanakan *lean* ke atas pengetahuan (KNW), sumber (RES) serta isu budaya dan sikap manusia (CUL) disahkan menggunakan pemodelan persamaan struktur kuasa dua terkecil separa (PLS-SEM). Didapati terdapat kekurangan penyelidikan dan penerbitan tentang LM di dalam industri kayu dan perabot. Berdasarkan keadaan semasa, status pelaksanaan *lean* adalah tidak memuaskan dan boleh di katakan masih di dalam pelaksanaan awal (fasa permulaan) berdasarkan tiga sebab utama. Pertama, 5S merupakan alat yang digunapakai secara meluas oleh syarikat; kedua, lebih separuh daripada syarikat telah mengamalkan *lean* untuk kurang dari 2 tahun; dan ketiga, lebih dari separuh daripada syarikat yang mengamalkan *lean* secara tidak menyeluruh bersetuju bahawa kekurangan pakar di dalam bidang *lean* merupakan faktor yang menghalang syarikat daripada melaksanakannya secara lebih meluas. Penemuan mendapati tiada hubungan antara amalan LM dengan saiz kilang dan pemilikan syarikat. Syarikat yang mengamalkan dan tidak mengamalkan *lean* mempunyai pandangan yang berbeza mengenai isu kekangan budaya dan kewangan. Tambahan lagi, penemuan menunjukkan bahawa CUL, KNW dan RES adalah berkaitan secara positif dan signifikan dengan halangan dan cabaran dalam melaksanakan *lean*. Oleh itu, tujuan penyelidikan ini adalah untuk mengukuhkan faktor KNW, CUL dan RES dengan menyediakan sokongan pendidikan dalam bentuk sesi latihan, lawatan tapak, bengkel dan kaunseling. Akhir sekali, bukti empirikal yang sah untuk konteks kurangnya kajian di industri perkayuan dan perabot telah disediakan dan satu rangka kerja pelaksanaan LM yang novel untuk membimbing SME dalam mengunapakai amalan-amalan LM dengan jayanya telah dibentangkan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	-	Analysis of variances
AVE	-	Average variance extracted
BCUL	-	Barriers to lean implementation related to culture and human attitudinal issues
BKNW	-	Barriers related to knowledge issues
BRES	-	Barriers related to resource issues
BSC	-	Balanced scorecard
CCUL	-	Challenges in implementing lean related to culture and human attitudinal issues
CIP	-	Continuous improvement process
CKNW	-	Challenges related to knowledge issues
COO	-	Chief of Operating Officer
CR	-	Composite reliability
CRES	-	Challenges related to resource issues
CTCS	-	Certified Timber and Credible Suppliers Global Sdn. Bhd
CUL	-	Culture and human attitudinal issues
CV	-	Convergent validity
DMAIC	-	Six Sigma design, measure, analyse, improve, control
DV	-	Discriminant validity
GMP	-	Good manufacturing practices
HOC	-	Higher-order component
HRM	-	Human resource management
HTMT	-	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations
IF	-	Impact factor
JIT	-	Just in time
JITF	-	Just-in-time flow
KDN	-	Ministry of Home Affairs
KL	-	Kuala Lumpur
KLSFIA	-	Kuala Lumpur and Selangor Furniture Industry Association
KNW	-	Knowledge issues

KPIs	-	Key performance indicators
LCCA	-	Life cycle cost analysis
LM	-	Lean manufacturing
LMP	-	Lean management program
LOCs	-	Lower-order components
LP	-	Lean practices
LSS	-	Lean Six Sigma
MARB	-	Mean absolute relative bias
MCDM	-	Multiple criteria decision-making
MF3	-	Malaysian Furniture and Furnishing Fair
MFC	-	Malaysian Furniture Council
MFPC	-	Malaysian Furniture Promotion Council
MPIC	-	Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities
MTIB	-	Malaysian Timber Industry Board
OEE	-	Overall equipment effectiveness;
PDCA	-	Plan-do-check-act cycle
PEKA	-	Association of Bumiputera Timber and Furniture Entrepreneur Malaysia
PLS	-	Partial least squares
QFD	-	Quality function deployment
QM	-	Quality management
R&D	-	Research and development
RES	-	Resource issues
RI	-	Ruang Idea Sdn. Bhd.
RMSE	-	Root mean squared error
SCP	-	Single-country publication
SEM	-	Structural equation modelling
SMED	-	Single minute exchange of dies
SMEs	-	Small and medium enterprises
SOPs	-	Standard operation procedure
SPSS	-	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
TLDM	-	Royal Malaysian Navy
TPM	-	Total productive maintenance

TQC	-	Total quality control
TQM	-	Total quality management
UK	-	United Kingdom
US	-	United States
VIF	-	Variation inflation factor
VSM	-	Value Stream Mapping
WIP	-	Work-in-process inventory
WPC	-	Wood plastic composite

LIST OF SYMBOLS

$\tilde{\mu}$	-	Population median
f^2	-	Effect size
Q^2	-	Blindfolding-based cross validated redundancy measure
R^2	-	Coefficient of determination
A	-	Level of confidence
B	-	Significance of path coefficients

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of research

After the publication of the ground-breaking work “The Machine that Changed the World” (Womack et al., 1990), lean underwent a significant and unprecedented evolution over the years, subsequently being unanimously accepted as a highly beneficial practice (Bhamu and Singh Sangwan, 2014). Over the course of time, a number of prominent researchers have explored the various range of tools for lean manufacturing (LM), since it has been successfully proved in a large variety of industries with many successful cases recorded in the literature (Pearce et al., 2018a).

An increasing number of literature studies have found that LM has significantly contributed to the success of companies in developed countries (e.g. Japan, the US, the UK, Germany, and Italy). Until now, this methodology has only been applied to developed countries, and there is little effort taken to investigate LM implementation in developing countries because of the awareness constraints (Amoako-Gyampah and Gargeya, 2001; Nawanir et al., 2013). The Malaysian Timber Industry Board (MTIB) has taken the initiative to increase the productivity and promote the quality of the factory environment through Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP-5S) and Lean Management Programme (LMP) for the Malaysian wood and furniture companies (MTIB, 2017c). The first initiative of lean implementation program was initiated in 2014 with the participation of 40 timber based product companies. The program aimed to encourage furniture manufacturers to implement lean practices (LP) for better business performance. The economic importance of this industry is evident: it contributes 33.7% out of the total of RM11.5 billion Malaysia’s total timber and timber products export in January 2017 until June 2017 (MTIB, 2017a).

A large number of studies found that while many companies are adhering to LM practices, they are also faced by various barriers in adopting any new lean production system (Oliveira et al., 2019). LM practices implementation is not easy and can take a long time to reach maturity (Filho et al., 2016). For example, the forest based (Finnish SMEs) companies were at a very early stage of development and may not have matured sufficiently within company thinking (D'Amato et al., 2018). Almost half of all small and medium enterprises (SMEs) fail in their first year of implementing LM due to their inability to address the accompanying issues and challenges (Ali et al., 2019). In order to guide LM implementation, Spagnol et al. (2013) examined the challenges faced during lean practices application.

Although researchers and practitioners have shown significant interest in studying lean manufacturing (LM) (Filho et al., 2016; Oliveira et al., 2019; Taddeo et al., 2019), LM implementation in less-automated sectors such as the wood industry is still showing sluggish progress (Rosienkiewicz et al., 2018). Moreover, the influences of lean manufacturing in the furniture industry is not promising because of the resources and expertise constraints (Pirraglia et al. 2009). An evidence indicates no respondents from wood and furniture company has implemented lean practices in China (Huo et al., 2019). The problem faced by wood processing factories is their incapability to implement LM in a continuous manner (Soetara et al., 2018). Yet, Suhardi et al. (2019) believe that the furniture industry has great potentials considering the successful implementation of Kaizen in an Indonesian furniture company.

Therefore, this study presents the current shortfalls of implementing LM in terms of motives, barriers, challenges, and applications to provides a framework used to facilitate LM implementation in the Malaysian wood and furniture industry.

1.2 Problem statements

A key problem with much of the literature is that the application of lean implementation in the furniture industry are limited; majority are predominantly practiced in the automotive industry. This is starkly evident in the investigation by

Henao et al. (2019) out of the 679 articles, 3% of the literature indicated being related to the furniture, machinery, foundry, and logistic industry. The lack of – a need for in-depth research on the practices in the wood and furniture industries.

Despite the numerous anecdotal and empirical evidences about the benefits of LM for the manufacturing industry, not many theoretical and methodological studies have been carried out about this matter in the context of wood and furniture companies particularly in emerging economies. The lack of research on the recognition of barriers and challenges in SMEs, particularly, in the wood and furniture companies, is indeed apparent, due to the fact research on the abovementioned matter still be considered limited. To complement and support the narrow body of knowledge on the under-researched scope, this study contributes to the prevailing lean implementation literature by revealing the current shortfalls of lean implementation in terms of motives, barriers, challenges, and applications. More specifically, this study is undertaken to clarify the aforementioned questions, which were fundamentally formulated to propagate the research purpose.

1.3 Research questions

The research questions are as follows:

- i. What are the motives, barriers, challenges, and applications of lean that are practiced by the Malaysian wood and furniture industry?
- ii. What is the status of awareness, level and duration of lean implementation in the Malaysian wood and furniture industry?
- iii. To what extent is the use of lean practices within the Malaysian wood and furniture industry related to company size and ownership?
- iv. How can lean be implemented in the Malaysian wood and furniture industry?

1.4 Research objectives

The main objectives of this study is developed the lean implementation framework exclusively for Malaysian wood and furniture industry. The objective of this study are guided by the following aims:

- i. To identify the motives, barriers, challenges and applications of lean practices in the Malaysian wood and furniture industry.
- ii. To investigate the status of lean practices in terms of awareness, level, and duration of its implementation in Malaysian furniture industry.
- iii. To examine the influence of the contextual factors related to company size and ownership on the lean status quo of that industry.
- iv. To propose a strategic framework for the implementation of lean.

1.5 Research scope

The scope of the research covers lean implementation in terms of motives, barriers, challenges and applications. This study emphasizes on the lean issues through the scenarios performed in developing countries, particularly in the context of Malaysian companies. The focus of this study is mainly on lean initiative programs conducted by MTIB to increase the productivity and promote the quality of factory environment through the Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP-5S) and Lean Management Programme (LMP). In order to guide LM implementation, the barriers for non-lean companies and challenges faced by lean companies were covered from three different perspectives: knowledge, culture and human attitudinal and resources issues.

1.6 Significance of research

This study discusses the barriers for non-lean companies and challenges faced by lean companies from a different perspective. Currently, researchers have studied the reasons why firms refuse to implement lean and the challenges in implementing lean individually. Furthermore, the models for investigating the barriers and challenges in implementing lean manufacturing (LM) in SMEs are not available. Therefore, this study developed a model using PLS-SEM which focuses on the barriers that prevent lean implementation as well as the challenges while implementing it in terms of knowledge issues (KNW), culture and human attitudinal issues (CUL), and resources issues (RES) among Malaysian wood and furniture companies.

The theoretical and practical contributions of this study are, firstly, it provides an intensive exploration on the current shortfalls of implementing LM in the Malaysian wood and furniture industry. Secondly, it presents a structured analysis framework that provides answers to the four research questions to facilitate LM implementation in the Malaysian wood and furniture industry. Thirdly, it reveals the effects of knowledge, culture and human attitude on the success of lean implementation especially in companies that have limited resources. In addition, this study also provides a framework for LM implementation that will bring competitive advantage not only in business improvement but also in improving working conditions and education for employees even with very limited resources.

1.7 Organization of the thesis

This thesis is organized into six chapters. Chapter 1 presents the background of the research, problem statements, research questions, research objectives, research scopes and significance of the research.

Chapter 2 provides insight into the specified domains through a literature review. In the first section, a bibliometric and classification method was performed to analyse the scientific literature. The next section presents the theoretical framework

and hypothetical framework based on the reviewed literature. This is followed by the introduction of the structural equation modelling (SEM) method used to validate the proposed model.

Chapter 3 addresses the research methodology. It provides the overall structure of the research methodology, systematic literature review analysis, data collection activities, data analysis, and framework development.

Chapter 4 presents the comprehensive results and discussion on the data analysis. This chapter consists of a findings of the pilot study to assess and improve the survey instrument, findings of the actual survey on the wood and furniture industries in Malaysia and findings of the refinement process from the lean initiative program conducted by MTIB to validate the challenges. Lastly is the validation of the proposed model.

Chapter 5 provides the whole view of the research with its ultimate result. This chapter outlines the integrative discussion from the pilot study, actual survey and refinement process for the development of the lean implementation framework. Additionally, the theoretical and practical implications are also presented.

Finally, Chapter 6 outlines the conclusions, limitations of the research and recommendations for future research.

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