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Perceptions of Trade Remedy Law and Firms' Response Readiness in Vietnam: A Stimulus–Organism–Response Approach.

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Abstract

This study examines the factors associated with firms' response readiness to trade remedy measures among business owners and managers of import–export enterprises, with perceived legal effectiveness of trade remedy law and trust in the legal and enforcement system examined as mediating variables. The research model is grounded in the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S–O–R) framework and empirically tested using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). Data were collected from a survey of 425 business owners and managers of import–export enterprises in Vietnam, an emerging economy in Asia. The findings indicate that perceived legal fairness, legal information accessibility, and perceived government support are positively associated with firms' response readiness through selected indirect pathways involving legal effectiveness and institutional trust. In contrast, perceived legal clarity and digital legal information quality are not significantly associated with firms' response readiness. Furthermore, importance–performance map analysis (IPMA) identifies perceived legal effectiveness of trade remedy law and trust in the legal and enforcement system as priority factors for enhancing firms' response readiness. The findings contribute to the empirical literature on trade remedies by extending the analysis to firms' perceptions and behavioral readiness. They also provide practical implications for regulatory authorities to improve the effectiveness of trade remedy law enforcement, strengthen trust in the legal and enforcement system, and enhance import–export firms' capacity to respond to trade remedy risks.

Keywords: trade remedy law; firms' response readiness; perceived legal effectiveness; legal trust; perceived legal fairness; SOR theory; import-export firms; Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing intensity of international trade tensions, geopolitical uncertainty, and the growing use of trade remedy instruments have made anti-dumping, countervailing, and safeguard measures increasingly consequential for firms engaged in international trade. Although these instruments are designed to address unfair trade practices and abnormal increases in imports, their application can create substantial uncertainty and adjustment pressures for affected firms. Recent evidence indicates that trade remedy measures can have significant consequences at the firm level. For instance, Li et al. [1] show that trade shocks associated with trade remedy instruments significantly affect firms' investment efficiency in China, suggesting that the implications of trade remedies may extend beyond their immediate effects on import competition. For firms in emerging economies that are highly dependent on international trade, these developments underscore the importance of legal knowledge, market monitoring, information management, and organizational preparedness in responding to trade remedy investigations.

This issue is particularly relevant to Vietnam, where deeper integration into global value chains and the expansion of export markets have increased firms' exposure to trade remedy measures imposed by foreign jurisdictions. Recent developments indicate that Vietnamese exports are increasingly subject to anti-dumping, countervailing, and safeguard investigations in international markets. Consequently, trade remedy risks are no longer merely matters of law or public policy but have increasingly become an important dimension of firms' international market management. Nevertheless, relatively limited research has examined how firms perceive trade remedy law and how such perceptions translate into readiness to respond to trade remedy measures. At the firm level, Kim and Pak [2] show that organizational factors and perceptions of fairness influence the trade remedy response capabilities of Korean firms. Similarly, based on a survey of 793 managers of import–export enterprises in Vietnam, Tran Viet and Phan Thanh [3] find that risk perceptions and managerial attitudes mediate the relationships between relevant factors and firms' intentions to undertake trade remedy measures. These findings suggest that firms' responses cannot be fully explained by the objective characteristics of trade remedy measures alone. Rather, managers' subjective perceptions and evaluations of the legal environment also play an important role. However, the roles of perceived legal effectiveness and trust in the legal and enforcement system as mechanisms underlying firms' response readiness remain insufficiently examined.

This gap is important because the effectiveness of a legal framework depends not only on the formal existence of regulations but also on how regulated organizations perceive and evaluate those regulations. Firms are more likely to engage constructively with regulatory systems when they perceive legal rules as clear, fair, effective, and trustworthy. Research on legal compliance provides support for this argument. For example, Gobena and van Dijke [4] find that procedural justice and trust are associated with voluntary compliance among business owners, highlighting the importance of firms' perceptions of regulatory procedures and enforcement authorities. In the context of trade remedies, firms that perceive trade remedy law as effective may develop greater confidence in the ability of the legal system to provide protection and procedural support. Such perceptions may, in turn, strengthen firms' trust in the legal and enforcement system and encourage the information gathering, legal preparation, monitoring, and organizational coordination required to respond to potential trade remedy measures. However, the mechanism through which perceived legal effectiveness shapes trust, and through which trust subsequently contributes to firms' response readiness, has received relatively limited attention in trade remedy research.

To address this gap, the present study adapts the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, rooted in environmental psychology [5], to explain how firms' perceptions of trade remedy law shape their response readiness in Vietnam. Within this framework, perceived legal clarity, perceived legal fairness, legal information accessibility, digital legal information quality, and perceived government support are conceptualized as external environmental stimuli. Perceived legal effectiveness of trade remedy law and trust in the legal and enforcement system represent firms' internal cognitive states, while firms' response readiness constitutes the behavioral response. This framework provides a coherent theoretical basis for explaining how firms' evaluations of the legal environment are processed through internal cognitive mechanisms and subsequently translated into organizational preparedness. Specifically, the study proposes that favorable perceptions of the legal environment are associated with stronger perceptions of legal effectiveness, which may reinforce trust in the legal and enforcement system and, ultimately, enhance firms' readiness to respond to trade remedy risks.

Against this background, this study examines the determinants and underlying mechanisms of firms' response readiness to trade remedy measures in Vietnam. Specifically, it investigates whether perceived legal clarity, perceived legal fairness, legal information accessibility, digital legal information quality, and perceived government support are associated with perceived legal effectiveness of trade remedy law and trust in the legal and enforcement system, and whether these internal cognitive states contribute to firms' response readiness. By integrating trade remedy research with the SOR framework and perspectives on legal perceptions and institutional trust, this study makes three contributions. First, it shifts the analysis of trade remedies beyond predominantly legal, economic, and policy-oriented perspectives toward a firm-level behavioral perspective. Second, it identifies perceived legal effectiveness of trade remedy law and trust in the legal and enforcement

system as important cognitive mechanisms through which firms' perceptions of the legal environment may translate into organizational preparedness. Third, it extends the application of the S–O–R framework to trade remedy management in an emerging economy by providing empirical evidence from Vietnam, a highly trade-dependent economy that is increasingly exposed to trade remedy measures imposed by foreign jurisdictions. The findings are expected to advance theoretical understanding of firms' responses to legal regulations while offering practical implications for improving the effectiveness, accessibility, and credibility of Vietnam's trade remedy legal framework.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Based on the existing literature, the research hypotheses are developed as follows:

The literature reviewed below includes both direct evidence on trade remedies and related studies of taxation, environmental policy, digital government, and regulatory institutions. Evidence from these adjacent settings supports the proposed conceptual mechanisms but does not establish that the same relationships necessarily hold for trade remedy readiness. The hypotheses therefore represent context-specific propositions to be examined using the Vietnamese enterprise survey. In particular, willingness to comply with a policy and readiness to respond to a trade remedy investigation are distinct outcomes, even when both may involve evaluations of effectiveness, fairness, and trust.

Perceived legal clarity (PLC) reflects the extent to which firms perceive trade remedy regulations as clear, understandable, consistent, and predictable in their application. In the context of trade remedies, these attributes are particularly important because firms must navigate relatively complex rules and procedures concerning anti-dumping, countervailing, and safeguard measures. When the law is perceived as clear, firms are better positioned to understand their rights, obligations, and relevant procedures, which may lead them to evaluate the legal framework more favorably in terms of its capacity to provide protection and support. Research on legal certainty links predictable legal rules to the efficient functioning of market interactions, providing a general theoretical basis for considering clarity and stability when examining how firms evaluate regulatory frameworks [6]. In the trade remedy context, Kim and Pak [2] similarly demonstrate that perceptual and organizational factors are important to the response capabilities of exporting firms. Research on governance and legal compliance further suggests that favorable perceptions of legitimacy, fairness, and regulatory arrangements can strengthen trust among regulated actors [7, 8]. Accordingly, when firms perceive trade remedy law as clear and predictable, they are more likely to regard the legal framework as effective and reliable. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1a: Perceived legal clarity (PLC) has a positive direct association with Perceived legal effectiveness of trade remedy law (PLE).

H1b: Perceived legal clarity (PLC) has a positive direct association with Trust in the legal and enforcement system (TLS).

According to the SOR framework, perceptions of the legal environment do not necessarily translate directly into firms' behavioral readiness. Rather, they are first processed through internal cognitive states. In this study, PLE and TLS represent two cognitive mechanisms within the Organism component through which PLC may influence Firms' Response Readiness (FRR). When firms perceive trade remedy law as effective, they have a stronger basis for believing that the legal framework can protect their legitimate rights and interests and provide procedural support in trade remedy proceedings. Similarly, trust in the legal and enforcement system may reduce uncertainty and encourage firms to allocate resources to information monitoring, document preparation, legal expertise, and response planning. Empirical evidence suggests that perceptions of regulatory effectiveness can encourage intentions to engage with relevant regulatory mechanisms, while trust and favorable evaluations of regulatory systems are significantly associated with compliance and organizational responses [7, 9]. In the trade remedy context, Kim and Pak [2] show that firms' perceptions are important to their response capabilities, while Tran Viet and Phan Thanh [3] provide evidence from Vietnam that managers' cognitive states and attitudes can mediate the formation of firms' responses to trade remedies. Therefore, PLC is expected not only to contribute to more favorable evaluations of legal effectiveness and reliability but also to indirectly enhance FRR through PLE and TLS. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1c: PLE positively mediates the relationship between PLC and FRR.

H1d: TLS positively mediates the relationship between PLC and FRR.

Perceived legal fairness (PLF) refers to the extent to which firms perceive trade remedy rules and enforcement mechanisms as ensuring fair, objective, and balanced treatment of relevant parties. In a legal environment, fairness affects not only whether firms accept a regulatory rule but also how they evaluate its quality and capacity to achieve its intended objectives. Recent empirical evidence indicates a close relationship between perceptions of fairness and evaluations of policy effectiveness. Specifically, Bergquist [10], based on four experiments involving environmental tax policies across the United States, the United Kingdom, and India, finds that perceiving a policy as unfair significantly reduces participants' evaluations of its effectiveness, while perceptions of unfairness also undermine trust in policymakers. This finding suggests that firms do not evaluate the effectiveness of a legal framework independently of how they perceive its fairness. This relationship is particularly relevant in the trade remedy context because the outcomes of investigations can directly affect firms' commercial interests. Kim and Pak [2] provide direct evidence from this field by showing that managers' perceptions

of fairness play a role in explaining exporting firms' response capabilities to trade remedy measures. In addition, Kappler et al. [11], based on 752 participants from public and private organizations across six countries, find that evaluations of regulatory performance are important in shaping trust among actors within regulatory systems, including regulated firms. Accordingly, when firms perceive trade remedy law as being developed and enforced fairly, they have a stronger basis for evaluating the legal framework as effective and reliable. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:
H2a: PLF has a positive direct association with PLE.
H2b: PLF has a positive direct association with TLS.

From an SOR perspective, legal fairness can be regarded as a characteristic of the legal environment that shapes firms' internal cognitive evaluations before these evaluations are translated into organizational responses. When firms perceive trade remedy law as fair, they are more likely to evaluate the framework as effective and reliable; these evaluations may, in turn, encourage them to invest resources in preparing for potential trade remedy measures. This mechanism is supported by research on the relationships among fairness, trust, and responses to regulatory systems. Lee and Brierley [12], in their study of credit institutions in the United Kingdom following regulatory changes, find that regulatory changes perceived as excessive and insufficiently attentive to procedural fairness can increase distrust in regulatory authorities. Similarly, Kappler et al. [11] show that trust among actors within regulatory systems is important to regulatory effectiveness because it facilitates information exchange, cooperation, and compliance; notably, their study included both business representatives and public-sector actors. In the trade remedy context, Kim and Pak [2] demonstrate that managers' perceptions of fairness mediate the relationship between firm-level factors and response capabilities to trade remedy measures, providing direct evidence that fairness perceptions can be translated into firms' response capabilities. Accordingly, PLE and TLS are expected to function as two cognitive mechanisms through which PLF influences FRR: the more fairly firms perceive trade remedy law, the more positively they are expected to evaluate its effectiveness and reliability, thereby increasing their readiness to allocate resources, obtain information, and develop response strategies for potential trade remedy measures. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:
H2c: PLE positively mediates the relationship between PLF and FRR.
H2d: TLS positively mediates the relationship between PLF and FRR.

Legal Information Accessibility (LIA) refers to the extent to which firms can easily search for, access, obtain, and use accurate, comprehensive, and timely legal information related to trade remedies. Unlike the clarity of legal rules themselves, LIA reflects the practical conditions that enable firms to access and utilize those rules in decision-making. This is particularly important for firms engaged in international trade because trade remedy regulations are often dispersed across multiple legal instruments, procedures, and information sources. Virkar et al. [13] show that accurate, relevant, and timely legal information constitutes an important input into effective decision-making by legal information users and emphasize the role of legal information retrieval systems in supporting such decisions. Similarly, Chang [14] finds that designing legal information systems to be user-friendly and responsive to users' needs can substantially improve access to legal information and help users understand and exercise their rights. Recent research also emphasizes that the publication of legal information is meaningful only when such information can be found, understood, and used by regulated actors. Harding and Keeling [15], in their study of accessible legal information, demonstrate that information accessibility is important in shaping actors' perceptions of the law. Accordingly, when firms can readily access authoritative, comprehensive, and timely information on trade remedies, they are better positioned to understand how the law operates, evaluate its capacity to protect and support them, and develop trust in the legal framework. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:
H3a: LIA has a positive direct association with PLE.
H3b: LIA has a positive direct association with TLS.

From an SOR perspective, access to legal information can be regarded as an external condition that enables firms to form cognitive evaluations of the legal framework before these evaluations are translated into organizational preparedness and responses. When firms have adequate and timely access to legal information, they can reduce uncertainty regarding their rights, obligations, procedures, and possible responses to trade remedy measures, while also being better able to evaluate the effectiveness of the law and the reliability of the legal and enforcement system. Empirical evidence from Virkar et al. [13] shows that accurate and timely legal information has strategic importance for decision-making, suggesting that access to legal information is not merely informational but can also facilitate higher-quality decisions. Chang [14] similarly demonstrates that improving the accessibility and usability of legal information can help users better understand their legal rights and obligations, while recent research on judicial information communication suggests that presenting legal information in accessible and comprehensible ways can strengthen public trust in judicial institutions. In the business context, this mechanism is particularly relevant to trade remedies because response readiness requires firms to identify risks promptly, monitor legal developments, determine their rights and obligations, collect evidence, and prepare appropriate courses of action. Therefore, LIA is expected to influence FRR not only by strengthening perceptions of legal effectiveness but also by reinforcing trust in the legal and enforcement system. In other words, when firms can access legal information

with greater ease, they are more likely to perceive the legal framework as capable of providing effective and reliable support, thereby becoming more proactive in preparing the resources and strategies required to respond to trade remedy measures. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:
H3c: PLE positively mediates the relationship between LIA and FRR.
H3d: TLS positively mediates the relationship between LIA and FRR.

Digital Legal Information Quality (DIQ) reflects the extent to which firms perceive legal information provided through digital platforms as accurate, complete, up to date, relevant to their needs, and easy to understand. In the context of digital transformation, the quality of online information has become an important determinant of the value that firms derive from digital legal information channels. Unlike LIA, which focuses on whether firms can locate and access information, DIQ concerns the value and reliability of the information content itself. Research on e-government indicates that information quality is an important component of digital service quality and influences how users evaluate government systems. Ye et al. [16] emphasize information quality as an important dimension of digital government service quality. Notably, AlAwadhi et al. [17] using survey data from 717 users and PLS-SEM, find that information quality and system design influence trust in e-government and, in turn, behavioral intentions. Similarly, research on e-government suggests that high-quality information, particularly information that is accurate, current, relevant, and comprehensible, can strengthen trust and encourage users' engagement with digital government services [18]. From a firm-level perspective, high-quality legal information can reduce ambiguity in interpreting regulations, improve firms' ability to assess the functions of the law accurately, and provide a stronger basis for trust in the legal system. This is particularly important in the trade remedy context because incomplete or outdated information may lead firms to misidentify legal risks and miss critical opportunities to prepare for potential responses. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:
H4a: DIQ has a positive direct association with PLE.
H4b: DIQ has a positive direct association with TLS.

Under the SOR framework, digital information quality can be viewed as an external stimulus that influences firms' cognitive processes before organizational responses are formed. When legal information available through digital platforms is perceived as accurate, current, and relevant, firms may experience less uncertainty in interpreting and applying regulations and consequently develop more favorable evaluations of legal effectiveness and greater trust in the legal and enforcement system. Hutahaean et al. [18] examine how social media, good governance, and public trust jointly relate to citizens' participation in e-government, while AlAwadhi et al. [17] provide PLS-SEM evidence that information quality can strengthen trust and subsequently influence behavioral intentions. Recent evidence on digital government services also suggests that information quality can improve user satisfaction and positive evaluations, which may contribute to perceived effectiveness and continued service use [19]. In the trade remedy context, this mechanism is particularly relevant because firms rely on trustworthy legal information to identify potential exposure to trade remedy measures, determine their rights and obligations, monitor developments in investigations, and prepare the necessary resources. Accordingly, DIQ is expected to influence firms' evaluations of trade remedy law and indirectly contribute to FRR through PLE and TLS. In other words, high-quality digital legal information on trade remedies may help firms perceive the law as useful and capable of providing protection while reinforcing their trust in the legal and enforcement system as a reliable source of guidance when responding to trade remedy risks. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:
H4c: PLE positively mediates the relationship between DIQ and FRR.
H4d: TLS positively mediates the relationship between DIQ and FRR.

Perceived Government Support (PGS) reflects firms' assessment of the extent to which the government and competent authorities provide the resources, guidance, training, consultation, early warnings, and technical assistance needed to understand and respond to trade remedy issues. In the trade remedy context, such support can help bridge the gap between the formal existence of legal rules and firms' ability to use those rules effectively to protect their interests. When firms perceive the government as proactively providing information, guidance, and assistance during implementation, they have a stronger basis for believing that the law is not merely formal but can also be effectively implemented in practice. Evidence from a study of 780 managers representing firms in Vietnam's economic zones indicates that government support is positively associated with trust in dispute resolution mechanisms, alongside legal system quality and dispute resolution effectiveness [20]. This finding is particularly relevant to the present study because both studies examine managers' perceptions within the Vietnamese legal context. Other evidence suggests that government support can provide positive signals regarding the state's commitment to firms and strengthen trust in institutional frameworks. For example, empirical research on small and medium-sized enterprises in Vietnam by Huong and Cuong [21] shows that government support can strengthen firms' tax payments, providing evidence of a relationship between institutional support and compliance behavior. Accordingly, when firms perceive that the government provides adequate and timely support related to trade remedies, they are more likely to evaluate the law as effective in protecting their legitimate interests and to trust the capacity of the legal and enforcement system to support them. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:
H5a: PGS has a positive direct association with PLE.

H5b: PGS has a positive direct association with TLS.

Under the SOR framework, government support can be regarded as an external institutional stimulus, whereas PLE and TLS represent cognitive states through which this stimulus is translated into firms' responses. Government support may reduce the information, expertise, and resource constraints firms face when dealing with trade remedy cases while signaling the government's substantive commitment to protecting firms' legitimate rights and interests. When such support is perceived as useful, firms are more likely to evaluate the functioning of the legal framework favorably and develop stronger trust in the legal and enforcement system. Ha Nguyen Son and Hai Phan Thanh [20] provide relevant evidence by showing that government support is positively associated with trust in dispute resolution mechanisms among Vietnamese firms; their study also indicates that regulatory support can help firms better understand legal procedures and reduce uncertainty associated with legal risks. More broadly, research on government responses and compliance behavior in Vietnam suggests that government responsiveness can promote compliance through trust in government and government support, illustrating the role of cognitive states in translating evaluations of government actions into responses among regulated actors [22]. In the trade remedy context, this mechanism is particularly important because firms' response readiness requires not only awareness of potential risks but also the ability to mobilize information, expertise, financial resources, and coordination with competent authorities. Therefore, government support is expected to contribute to FRR not only by strengthening perceptions of legal effectiveness but also by reinforcing trust in the legal and enforcement system. In other words, the more strongly firms perceive the government as supporting them in trade remedy matters, the more likely they are to believe that the law can protect their interests and to prepare proactively for potential trade remedy situations. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H5c: PLE positively mediates the relationship between PGS and FRR.

H5d: TLS positively mediates the relationship between PGS and FRR.

Perceived Legal Effectiveness of Trade Remedy Law (PLE) reflects the extent to which firms believe that the legal framework can effectively perform the functions for which it is designed, such as protecting the legitimate rights and interests of relevant parties, addressing injurious trade practices, and providing appropriate legal mechanisms for firms to respond to trade remedy proceedings. A legal system perceived as effective not only produces expected legal outcomes but also provides a basis for regulated actors to form positive expectations regarding its capacity and reliability. Kappler et al. [11], based on an experiment involving 752 actors within regulatory systems across six countries, show that regulatory performance is an important determinant of trust among public and private actors, including business representatives; authorities perceived as more effective receive significantly higher levels of trust. Similarly, Verhoest et al. [23] emphasize the interrelationship between trust, performance, and legitimacy in regulatory systems, distinguishing the contribution of watchful trust to perceived performance from the contribution of good-faith trust to perceived legitimacy. In the present context, when firms perceive trade remedy law as capable of effectively protecting and supporting them, they have a stronger basis for trusting both the legal framework and its enforcement mechanisms. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H6: PLE has a positive direct association with TLS.

PLE may also directly contribute to FRR to trade remedy measures. When firms believe that the legal framework is useful and capable of protecting their legitimate interests, investing resources in trade remedy-related activities becomes more worthwhile. Firms may proactively monitor markets, collect and maintain relevant data, prepare documentation, identify legal expertise, and establish response procedures when potential risks or investigations arise. Recent empirical evidence supports this mechanism. Na et al. [24], using comparative data from the United States and South Korea, find that perceived policy effectiveness is positively associated with voluntary compliance, with this relationship partly explained by policy legitimacy. Notably, they report that perceived effectiveness has greater explanatory power than perceived procedural fairness in predicting compliance behavior. Although their study does not directly address trade remedies, it provides relevant evidence that when actors perceive a regulatory mechanism as capable of achieving its intended objectives, they tend to respond more positively to that mechanism. A similar mechanism may operate in the trade remedy context: the more effective firms perceive trade remedy law to be, the stronger their motivation may be to prepare resources and take early action in response to potential risks or investigations. Therefore:

H7: PLE has a positive direct association with FRR.

TLS reflects firms' expectations that trade remedy rules and enforcement mechanisms are reliable, consistent, and capable of protecting their legitimate interests. Trust is particularly important in areas where firms must exchange information, provide evidence, and coordinate with regulatory authorities because firms are more likely to participate proactively when they believe that the regulatory system operates according to predictable and reliable principles. Maman et al. [25], in a systematic review of trust in regulatory authorities, identify trust as an important component of effective market governance and regulation and show its relevance to compliance and cooperation among regulated actors. Kappler et al. [11] similarly demonstrate that trust within regulatory systems facilitates information flows, cooperation, and compliance. Their study is particularly relevant to the present research because the sample included both private actors and

regulated parties, including business representatives. Likewise, Grimmelikhuijsen et al. [8] show that trust in regulatory authorities is relevant to regulatory legitimacy and voluntary compliance among regulated actors, although the effects of different forms of enforcement may vary across contexts. In the trade remedy context, response readiness often requires firms to disclose sensitive information, commit resources, and cooperate with investigative or regulatory authorities. Therefore, when firms have greater trust in the legal and enforcement system, they are more likely to proactively prepare for and participate in the procedures necessary to protect their legitimate interests. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H8: TLS has a positive direct association with FRR.

Based on the theoretical arguments and empirical evidence presented above, this study proposes that attributes of the legal and institutional environment, including PLC, PLF, LIA, DIQ and PGS, serve as external stimuli that shape firms' evaluations of the trade remedy legal framework. These stimuli are expected to strengthen PLE and TLS, which represent firms' internal cognitive states within the Organism component. In turn, PLE and TLS are expected to contribute to FRR, representing the Response component. Based on these proposed relationships, the theoretical research model is presented in Figure 1:

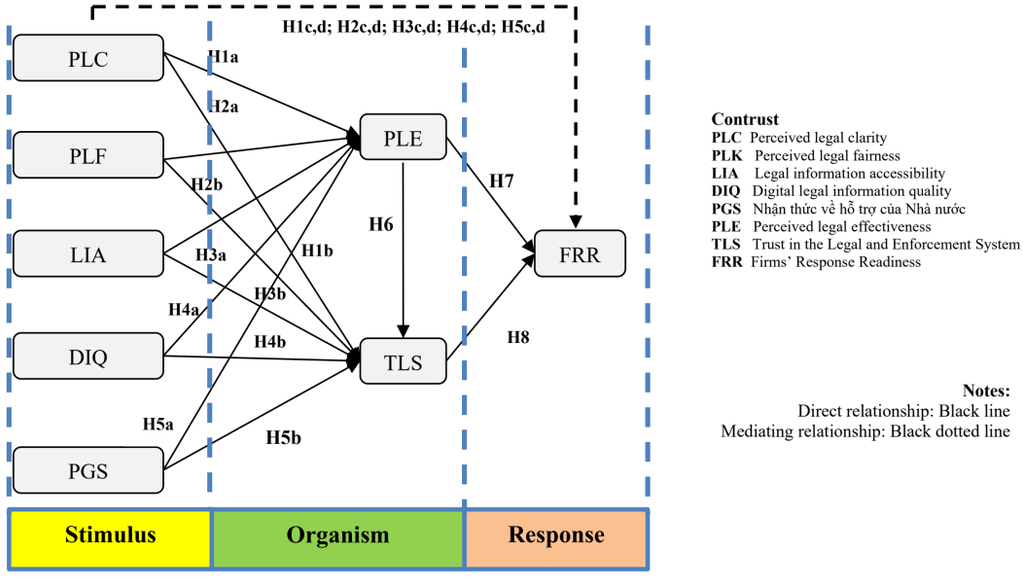


Figure 1. *Proposed research model with hypothesized paths*

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The study was conducted through a five-step research procedure. First, the research constructs and measurement scales were identified based on a review of previous studies and adapted to the context of trade remedy law in Vietnam. Second, a preliminary questionnaire was developed and assessed in terms of content, clarity, and appropriateness of the measurement items. Third, a pilot survey was conducted to identify potential problems with the wording of the questions and respondents' ability to understand and answer them. Fourth, the finalized questionnaire was administered to enterprises in Vietnam to collect the primary data. Finally, the collected data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

3.2. MEASUREMENT DEVELOPMENT AND QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The constructs in the proposed model were measured using scales reflecting the perceptions of enterprise representatives. The measurement scales were adopted and adapted from relevant studies addressing legal clarity and fairness, accessibility and quality of legal information, government support, perceived effectiveness of legal systems, trust in regulatory institutions, and firms' ability to respond to trade remedy measures. For constructs for which no measurement scale specifically developed for the trade remedy context was available, the measurement items were adapted and contextualized from established scales and subsequently modified to reflect the legal and commercial characteristics of Vietnam.

Each construct was measured using multiple items to enhance measurement reliability and adequately represent the underlying theoretical concept. The measurement items adapted from previous studies were reviewed by a panel of experts for contextual appropriateness. The panel comprised 10 experts, including legal specialists from the Vietnam Trade

Remedies Authority under the Ministry of Industry and Trade and directors or heads of import–export departments at several exporting enterprises that had previously faced anti-dumping cases. The expert interviews were used to refine the wording of the questionnaire, remove potentially ambiguous legal terminology, and incorporate context-specific items relating to government support and the practical response strategies adopted by Vietnamese enterprises.

Following the expert review, the questionnaire was pilot-tested with a small group of managers or enterprise representatives whose characteristics were comparable to those of the target respondents. The pilot results were used to assess the comprehensibility of the questions, the appropriateness of the questionnaire sequence, and the consistency of the measurement items. Necessary revisions were made before the formal survey was administered.

The final questionnaire consisted of two sections. The first section collected demographic and enterprise-related information, including gender, age, educational attainment, job position, business sector, and previous exposure to trade remedy cases. The second section comprised the measurement items for the constructs included in the research model. All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree." The full questionnaire used in the study is provided in Appendix A, Table 9, which lists the measurement items, their construct assignments, and the studies informing their development. These sources provide conceptual foundations; the items were adapted for the present trade remedy context rather than treated as verbatim measures validated in the original studies.

3.3. SURVEY RESPONDENTS AND DATA COLLECTION

The target respondents were business owners, senior managers, or other representatives with sufficient knowledge of their enterprises' business operations, legal affairs, import–export activities, or international trade. These respondents were selected on the assumption that they were sufficiently knowledgeable to assess both the legal environment in which their enterprises operated and their firms' preparedness for potential trade remedy risks and proceedings. The unit of analysis was the enterprise, whereas the surveyed individual served as a key informant representing the enterprise. To reduce dependence among observations and maintain consistency at the enterprise level, the study sought to obtain one representative respondent from each enterprise. Respondents were instructed to answer the questions based on their assessment of the enterprise's characteristics, capabilities, and practices rather than solely on their personal knowledge or experience.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for the Study Sample*

Profile	Category	Frequency / (N=425)	Percentage
Sex	Male	232	54.6
Sex	Female	193	45.4
Age	Under 30 years old	35	8.2
Age	From 30 to 39 years old	58	13.6
Age	From 40 to 49 years old	166	39.0
Age	From 50 to 59 years old	145	34.1
Age	Over 60 years old	21	5.1
Education Level	University (Bachelor's/Engineer)	312	73.4
Education Level	Postgraduate	113	26.6
Job Position	Business Owner	192	45.1
Job Position	General Director / Director	196	46.1
	Deputy General Director / Deputy Director	24	5.6
	Authorized Representative of the Board of Directors	13	3.2
Business Sector	Export	125	29.4
Business Sector	Import	162	38.1
Business Sector	Both Export and Import	138	32.5
Trade Remedy Experience	None / Never	125	29.4
Trade Remedy Experience	Followed / Interested	156	36.7
Trade Remedy Experience	Has been investigated	36	8.4
Trade Remedy Experience	Has applied trade remedy measure	78	18.3
Trade Remedy Experience	Has participated in handling cases	30	7.2

Data were collected through both face-to-face and online surveys to facilitate access to enterprises across different geographical areas and business sectors. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of the information provided. Only completed questionnaires that met the screening criteria were included in the analysis. To improve data quality, screening questions were incorporated into the questionnaire to ensure that respondents genuinely represented an enterprise and possessed sufficient knowledge of its

commercial, legal, or managerial activities. Incomplete responses, responses showing signs of patterned answering, and responses that failed to meet the screening requirements were excluded before the data analysis.

The data collection was conducted from January to June 2026. A total of 550 questionnaires were distributed, of which 430 were returned for initial screening, representing a questionnaire return rate of approximately 78.2%. After checking the completeness and consistency of the responses, five questionnaires were identified as invalid and excluded from the dataset. Consequently, 425 valid responses were retained for the final analysis, corresponding to a usable response rate of approximately 77.3% of the 550 questionnaires distributed. The sample was designed to cover manufacturing enterprises, exporters, importers, and enterprises engaged simultaneously in multiple international trade activities. This diversity of enterprises enhances the ability of the sample to capture different perspectives on trade remedy law and firms' response readiness. Detailed characteristics of the research sample are presented in Table 1.

3.4. DATA ANALYSIS

The study employed PLS-SEM using SmartPLS to assess both the measurement and structural models. PLS-SEM was selected because the study simultaneously examines multiple relationships among latent constructs, including both direct and indirect effects, while emphasizing the explanatory and predictive power of the endogenous constructs within a relatively complex model.

First, because the study relied on self-reported data and measured all constructs using a single questionnaire, the potential for common method bias (CMB) was considered at the research design stage. Several procedural remedies were implemented, including ensuring respondent anonymity, minimizing leading questions, using clear and unambiguous wording, and separating different groups of questions within the questionnaire. Following data collection, the potential presence of CMB was further assessed using Harman's single-factor test [26] and the full collinearity test [27].

The measurement model was then evaluated in terms of construct reliability and convergent validity. Specifically, the outer loadings of the measurement items, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) were examined. Outer loadings of approximately 0.70 or higher, Cronbach's alpha and CR values of at least 0.70, and AVE values of 0.50 or higher were used as commonly accepted benchmarks for assessing construct reliability and convergent validity. Discriminant validity was assessed primarily using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT), together with an examination of the correlations among latent constructs, to ensure adequate empirical distinctiveness among the constructs in accordance with the criteria proposed by Hair et al. [28, 29] and Fornell and Larcker [30], with HTMT assessed according to Henseler et al. [31].

Once the measurement model met the required criteria, the structural model was assessed using path coefficients, statistical significance, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). A bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was employed to estimate standard errors and assess the statistical significance of the path coefficients. The direct hypotheses were tested by examining the structural paths among the constructs. Specifically, the study assessed the relationships of PLC, PLF, LIA, DIQ, and PGS with PLE and TLS, as well as the relationships of PLE and TLS with FRR. Indirect effects were examined using the bootstrapping procedure to determine whether PLE and TLS mediated the relationships between the external stimuli and FRR.

3.5. RESEARCH ETHICS

The study adhered to the fundamental ethical principles governing research involving human participants. Participation in the survey was entirely voluntary, and respondents were informed of the study's purpose, their right to decline participation, and the principles governing the confidentiality of the information provided. The data were used solely for research purposes and analyzed in aggregate form, with no personally or organizationally identifiable information disclosed. All research procedures were conducted in accordance with the ethical approval reported by the authors under Decision No. 1725/QD-BGDDT dated June 26, 2024, issued by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam.

4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

4.1. ASSESSMENT OF COMMON METHOD BIAS

Before assessing the measurement and structural models, the potential presence of common method bias (CMB) was examined to ensure that the observed relationships among the research constructs were not substantially affected by systematic measurement error arising from the use of a single survey instrument.

To assess CMB, Harman's single-factor test was conducted using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in SPSS 26. According to this approach, CMB is considered a serious concern when a single unrotated factor accounts for more than 50% of the total variance [26]. The results showed that the first unrotated factor accounted for only 38.409% of the total variance, substantially below the recommended 50% threshold. This finding indicates that no single factor accounted for

a dominant proportion of the covariance among the measurement items. Accordingly, this diagnostic did not identify a dominant single-factor pattern. However, Harman's test cannot rule out common method bias, and its result should be interpreted alongside the additional collinearity assessment and the procedural safeguards used during data collection. The measurement and structural models were therefore assessed with this limitation in mind.

To provide a more rigorous assessment of potential CMB, the full collinearity assessment proposed by Kock [27] was also employed. This procedure involves simultaneously regressing all latent variables in the model on a randomly generated dummy dependent variable to obtain the corresponding variance inflation factor (VIF) values. This assessment of both vertical and lateral collinearity can detect common method variance that may remain undetected by conventional procedures such as Harman's single-factor test. As reported in Table 2, all VIF values ranged from 1.551 to 2.092, well below the threshold of 3.3 proposed by Kock [27]. These results did not exceed the proposed diagnostic threshold; nevertheless, they cannot establish that the dataset is entirely free from common method bias.

Table 2. *Results of the Full Collinearity Assessment (VIF)*

Relationships	Collinearity statistics (VIF)
DIQ -> Random	1.617
FRR -> Random	1.706
LIA -> Random	2.030
PGS -> Random	1.764
PLC -> Random	2.092
PLE -> Random	1.551
PLF -> Random	1.788
TLS -> Random	1.730

4.2. MEASUREMENT MODEL ASSESSMENT

Following Hair et al. [28], the measurement model was assessed using SmartPLS in terms of construct reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. As shown in Table 3, the outer loadings of the measurement items ranged from 0.733 to 0.877. Cronbach's alpha values ranged from 0.811 to 0.900, exceeding the minimum recommended threshold of 0.70, while composite reliability (CR) values ranged from 0.876 to 0.926, also exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70. These results indicate that all constructs demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency reliability, consistent with the reliability criteria discussed by Hair et al. [29]. The average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from 0.638 to 0.721, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50. Therefore, the measurement scales demonstrated satisfactory convergent validity according to the criterion proposed by Fornell and Larcker [30].

Discriminant validity was assessed using the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT) criterion proposed by Henseler et al. [31]. An HTMT value below 0.85 was used as the threshold for establishing adequate discriminant validity. As reported in Table 4, all HTMT values between pairs of constructs were below 0.85. These results indicate that the constructs exhibit sufficient discriminant validity, confirming that they are empirically distinct from one another.

4.3. ASSESSMENT OF THE PLS-SEM STRUCTURAL MODEL

The PLS-SEM structural model was assessed by examining potential multicollinearity, the model's explanatory power, and its predictive relevance. Inner variance inflation factor (VIF) values below 3 are generally considered indicative of the absence of problematic multicollinearity [29]. In addition, the coefficient of determination (R^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) are commonly used to assess the model's explanatory and predictive performance, with higher values indicating greater explanatory and predictive power of the model [29].

As reported in Table 5, the inner VIF values ranged from 1.328 to 2.368, all below the threshold of 3. This indicates that multicollinearity does not pose a concern in the structural model. The R^2 values for FRR, PLE, and TLS were 0.452, 0.247, and 0.411, respectively. Thus, the model explained 45.2% of the variance in FRR, 24.7% of the variance in PLE, and 41.1% of the variance in TLS. Furthermore, the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) was 0.045, which is below the commonly recommended threshold of 0.08. This result is consistent with the conventional SRMR benchmark discussed by Hu and Bentler [32]. However, that benchmark was developed for covariance-based models and should be interpreted cautiously in PLS-SEM; SRMR alone does not establish model validity or predictive performance.

To test the hypothesized direct and indirect relationships, path coefficients and p-values were examined to assess the magnitude and statistical significance of the estimated effects. To assess the sampling uncertainty of the estimated relationships within the available survey data, the model was further assessed using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples, following the recommendation of Hair et al. [28]. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in Figure 2 and Tables 6 and 7.

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics, Internal Consistency Reliability, and Convergent Validity*

Constructs	Code item	Mean	SD	Outer / Loading	Outer VIF	CA	C.R	AVE
DIQ	DIQ1	3.84	0.618	0.858	2.228	0.870	0.911	0.719
	DIQ2	3.87	0.620	0.830	1.972	0.870		
	DIQ3	3.83	0.634	0.856	2.122	0.870		
	DIQ4	3.82	0.641	0.847	2.082	0.870		
FRR	FRR1	4.10	0.725	0.860	2.554	0.900	0.926	0.713
	FRR2	4.07	0.749	0.839	2.231	0.900		
	FRR3	4.15	0.754	0.844	2.276	0.900		
	FRR4	4.08	0.742	0.849	2.342	0.900		
	FRR5	4.08	0.733	0.830	2.226	0.900		
LIA	LIA1	3.70	0.616	0.840	2.068	0.871	0.912	0.721
	LIA2	3.71	0.617	0.877	2.259	0.871		
	LIA3	3.65	0.612	0.841	2.120	0.871		
	LIA4	3.68	0.624	0.838	2.016	0.871		
PGS	PGS1	3.86	0.641	0.831	1.783	0.826	0.884	0.656
	PGS2	3.79	0.670	0.754	1.558	0.826		
	PGS3	3.85	0.593	0.815	1.861	0.826		
	PGS4	3.83	0.585	0.838	1.848	0.826		
PLC	PLC1	3.87	0.622	0.828	2.038	0.860	0.905	0.704
	PLC2	3.83	0.573	0.829	2.040	0.860		
	PLC3	3.82	0.620	0.857	2.053	0.860		
	PLC4	3.77	0.615	0.842	2.035	0.860		
PLE	PLE1	4.07	0.756	0.846	1.904	0.811	0.876	0.639
	PLE2	4.02	0.792	0.733	1.454	0.811		
	PLE3	4.02	0.763	0.833	1.888	0.811		
	PLE4	4.05	0.766	0.780	1.597	0.811		
PLF	PLF1	3.87	0.658	0.804	1.746	0.828	0.885	0.659
	PLF2	3.85	0.617	0.840	1.834	0.828		
	PLF3	3.88	0.610	0.806	1.711	0.828		
	PLF4	3.87	0.590	0.796	1.757	0.828		
TLS	TLS1	3.86	0.677	0.764	1.530	0.811	0.876	0.638
	TLS2	3.81	0.684	0.793	1.638	0.811		
	TLS3	3.81	0.682	0.812	1.728	0.811		
	TLS4	3.84	0.724	0.826	1.780	0.811		

Note: CR: Composite Reliability; AVE: Average Variance Extracted, CA: Cronbach's Alpha

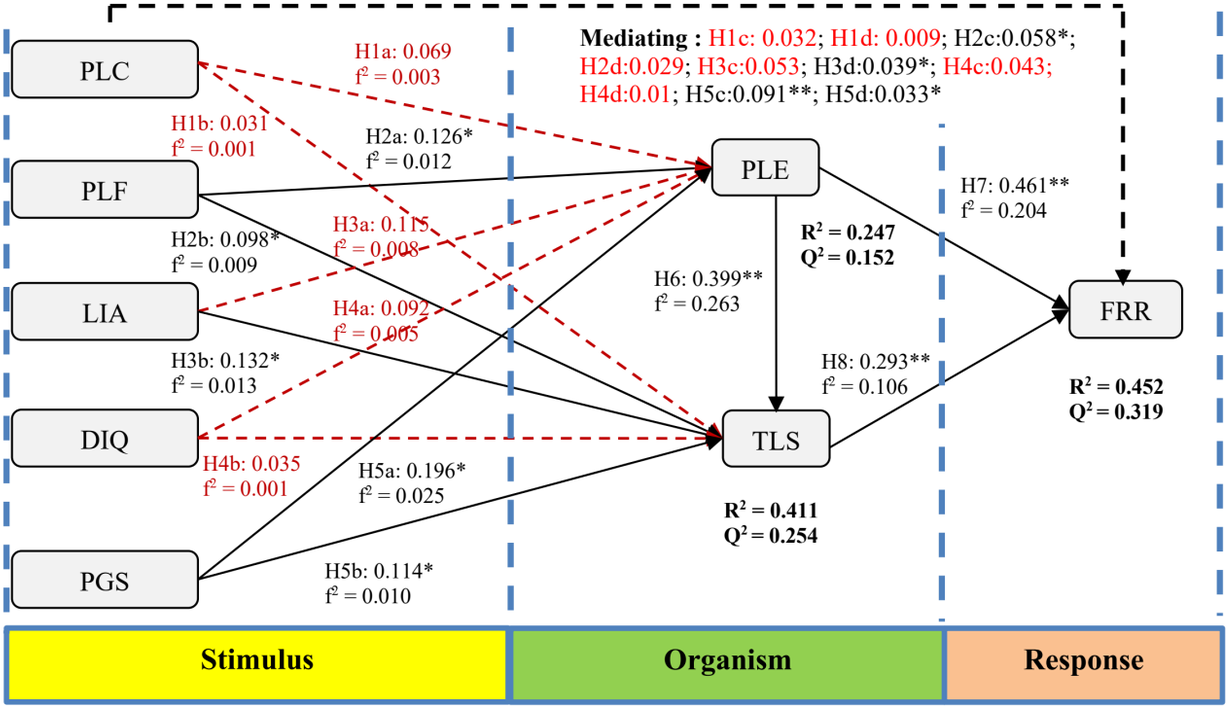
Table 4. *Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratios of Correlations (HTMT) for Discriminant Validity*

Construct	DIQ	FRR	LIA	PGS	PLC	PLE	PLF	TLS
DIQ								
FRR	0.427							
LIA	0.748	0.428						
PGS	0.721	0.504	0.740					
PLC	0.743	0.415	0.749	0.743				
PLE	0.487	0.732	0.486	0.523	0.472			
PLF	0.724	0.428	0.654	0.625	0.679	0.466		
TLS	0.517	0.650	0.550	0.558	0.508	0.697	0.515	

The results presented in Table 6 indicate that the Stimulus constructs (PLC, PLF, LIA, DIQ, and PGS) exerted varying effects on firms' perceptions and trust. Specifically, PLF and PGS had positive and statistically significant effects on both PLE and TLS, whereas LIA had a statistically significant effect only on TLS. In contrast, PLC and DIQ did not have statistically significant direct effects on either PLE or TLS. Notably, the core relationships within the Organism–Response component were supported. PLE exerted the strongest effects on both TLS and FRR, while TLS also had a positive and statistically significant effect on FRR. Regarding effect sizes, based on the criteria proposed by Cohen [33], the effects of PLE $\rightarrow$ TLS ($f^2 = 0.263$) and PLE $\rightarrow$ FRR ($f^2 = 0.204$) were moderate, whereas the effect of TLS $\rightarrow$ FRR ($f^2 = 0.106$) was small. The remaining relationships exhibited small or negligible effect sizes according to Cohen's criteria [33]. These findings suggest that PLE plays a central role in shaping firms' trust in the trade remedy legal framework and strengthening their readiness to respond to trade remedy measures.

Table 5. *Results of the structural model evaluation*

Construct or Path	Inner VIF	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Q^2
FRR		0.452	0.450	0.319
PLE		0.247	0.238	0.152
TLS		0.411	0.403	0.254
DIQ -> PLE	2.356			
DIQ -> TLS	2.368			
LIA -> PLE	2.263			
LIA -> TLS	2.280			
PGS -> PLE	2.071			
PGS -> TLS	2.122			
PLC -> PLE	2.268			
PLC -> TLS	2.274			
PLE -> FRR	1.476			
PLE -> TLS	1.328			
PLF -> PLE	1.823			
PLF -> TLS	1.844			
TLS -> FRR	1.476			



Notes:
Direct relationship: Black line; Not sigfinance relationship: Red dotted line
Mediating relatonship : Black dotted line;
**p<0.01; *p<0.05

Figure 2. *Results of PLS-SEM structural model assessment*

Using the bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples in SmartPLS, the indirect effects in the proposed model were further assessed. The results reported in Table 7 indicate that PLF and PGS had statistically significant indirect effects on FRR through PLE, whereas LIA exerted a significant indirect effect through TLS. In contrast, the indirect effects of PLC and DIQ were not statistically significant. PGS also had a statistically significant indirect association with FRR through TLS. Notably, the paths PLF → PLE → FRR and PGS → PLE → FRR suggest that perceptions of legal fairness and government support can be translated into greater response readiness through firms' assessments of legal effectiveness. Meanwhile, the path LIA → TLS → FRR indicates that access to legal information primarily contributes to response readiness by strengthening trust in the trade remedy legal framework. Overall, these findings further support the central role of PLE in the proposed model, while TLS serves as an important mechanism linking firms' perceptions of the legal environment to their readiness to respond to trade remedy measures.

Table 6. *Results of Tests of the Direct Relationships*

Path	Hypothesis	β	STDEV	T statistics	p-value	f^2	CIs	CIs	Decision
Path	Hypothesis	β	STDEV	T statistics	p-value	f^2	2.5%	97.5%	Decision
PLC -> PLE	H1a	0.069	0.061	1.127	0.260	0.003	-0.051	0.188	No
PLC -> TLS	H1b	0.031	0.055	0.560	0.575	0.001	-0.079	0.137	No
PLF -> PLE	H2a	0.126	0.056	2.225	0.026	0.012	0.018	0.238	Yes
PLF -> TLS	H2b	0.098	0.047	2.084	0.037	0.009	0.005	0.189	Yes
LIA -> PLE	H3a	0.115	0.065	1.768	0.077	0.008	-0.012	0.245	No
LIA -> TLS	H3b	0.132	0.058	2.279	0.023	0.013	0.021	0.247	Yes
DIQ -> PLE	H4a	0.092	0.062	1.490	0.136	0.005	-0.029	0.212	No
DIQ -> TLS	H4b	0.035	0.055	0.626	0.531	0.001	-0.077	0.142	No
PGS -> PLE	H5a	0.196	0.063	3.118	0.002	0.025	0.073	0.320	Yes
PGS -> TLS	H5b	0.114	0.053	2.132	0.033	0.010	0.009	0.218	Yes
PLE -> TLS	H6	0.399	0.042	9.453	< 0.001	0.263	0.314	0.481	Yes
PLE -> FRR	H7	0.461	0.038	12.264	< 0.001	0.204	0.386	0.535	Yes
TLS -> FRR	H8	0.293	0.044	6.696	< 0.001	0.106	0.204	0.376	Yes

Table 7. *Results of Tests of the Indirect Relationships*

Path	Hypothesis	β	STDEV	T statistics	p-value	CIs	CIs	Decision
Path	Hypothesis	β	STDEV	T statistics	p-value	2.5%	97.5%	Decision
PLC -> PLE -> FRR	H1c	0.032	0.029	1.114	0.265	-0.024	0.088	No
PLC -> TLS -> FRR	H1d	0.009	0.016	0.555	0.579	-0.023	0.041	No
PLF -> PLE -> FRR	H2c	0.058	0.027	2.148	0.032	0.008	0.113	Yes
PLF -> TLS -> FRR	H2d	0.029	0.015	1.950	0.051	0.002	0.060	No
LIA -> PLE -> FRR	H3c	0.053	0.030	1.767	0.077	-0.006	0.113	No
LIA -> TLS -> FRR	H3d	0.039	0.018	2.178	0.029	0.006	0.075	Yes
DIQ -> PLE -> FRR	H4c	0.043	0.029	1.481	0.139	-0.013	0.100	No
DIQ -> TLS -> FRR	H4d	0.010	0.016	0.619	0.536	-0.022	0.043	No
PGS -> PLE -> FRR	H5c	0.091	0.031	2.947	0.003	0.032	0.153	Yes
PGS -> TLS -> FRR	H5d	0.033	0.017	1.982	0.048	0.002	0.069	Yes

IPMA supplements the structural model by jointly considering each construct's total effect on the target outcome and its rescaled performance score [34]. These two dimensions help identify potential priorities for managerial attention. The rankings should nevertheless be interpreted as model-based associations rather than estimates of the gains that would necessarily result from a policy intervention.

Table 8. *Results of the Importance-Performance Map Analysis (IPMA)*

Factors affecting FRR	Total effects	Performance (%)
DIQ	0.064	61.325
LIA	0.105	61.892
PGS	0.147	61.126
PLC	0.049	60.703
PLE	0.578	72.162
PLF	0.101	62.163
TLS	0.293	65.890
Average	0.191	63.609

The Importance–Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) results for FRR, presented in Table 8 and Figure 3, show that PLE (Perceived Legal Effectiveness of trade remedy law) has the highest importance for FRR (Importance = 0.578), while also exhibiting a relatively high performance level (72.162%). This finding indicates that PLE is both the most important determinant of FRR and an aspect that firms currently evaluate relatively positively.

TLS ranks second in terms of importance (0.293) but has a lower performance level than PLE (65.890%), suggesting that it represents a key area for improvement to strengthen firms' FRR. PGS (0.147), LIA (0.105), and PLF (0.101) show moderate to low levels of importance, with performance levels of approximately 61–62%, whereas DIQ (0.064) and PLC (0.049) have the lowest importance values.

Overall, the IPMA results highlight PLE and TLS as the two most managerially salient factors for FRR. PLE represents a relative strength in firms' current assessments, whereas TLS constitutes a more promising area for improvement. By contrast, enhancing PLC and DIQ in isolation may not generate a commensurate improvement in FRR, given their relatively low importance within the overall model.

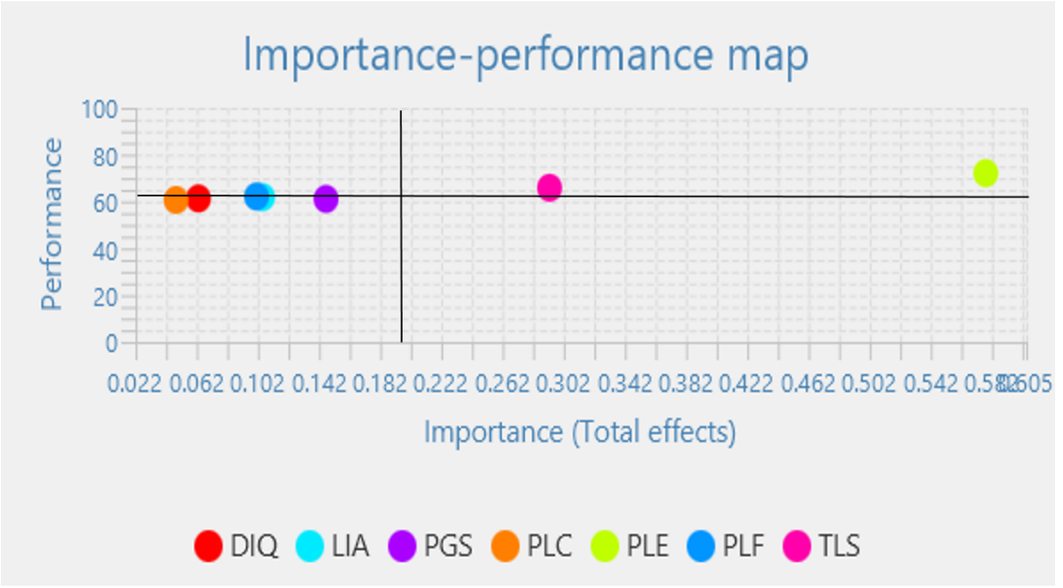


Figure 3. *Importance–Performance Map for Firms' Response Readiness*

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings indicate that the formation of FRR to trade remedy measures does not primarily depend on firms simply perceiving the law as clear or digital legal information as high quality. Rather, it is largely shaped by how firms evaluate the effectiveness of trade remedy law and develop trust in the legal and enforcement system. This is evident from the core relationships PLE → TLS (β = 0.399; f^2 = 0.263), PLE → FRR (β = 0.461; f^2 = 0.204), and TLS → FRR (β = 0.293; f^2 = 0.106). Based on Cohen's criteria [33], the first two relationships have moderate effect sizes, whereas the effect of TLS on FRR is small. These findings support the SOR logic that external stimuli need to be processed through internal cognitive states before being translated into behavioral responses. They are also consistent with Kappler et al. [11], who found that regulatory performance is an important determinant of trust, while trust facilitates information exchange, cooperation, and compliance within regulatory systems. Importantly, the present study extends this argument from regulatory mechanisms in general to the specific context of trade remedy law, suggesting that firms are more likely to invest resources in monitoring, evidence preparation, and response activities when they perceive that the legal system can provide meaningful protection and support. This finding is also consistent with recent evidence from 1,761 microenterprise owners in Greece, which shows a strong association between trust in tax authorities and voluntary compliance, while perceptions of fairness and legitimacy contribute to the formation of trust [7].

Another important finding is that PLF and PGS are the two stimuli that most clearly translate into FRR through the proposed cognitive mechanisms. PLF has statistically significant direct effects on both PLE and TLS and also exerts an indirect effect on FRR through PLE. Similarly, PGS has statistically significant direct effects on PLE and TLS and generates significant indirect effects through both mechanisms. Although the direct effect sizes of PLF and PGS are small (f^2 approximately 0.009–0.025), the IPMA results show that PGS has an importance value of 0.147, higher than that of PLF (0.101), indicating that government support has meaningful practical relevance even though its individual effect is relatively limited. This finding is consistent with Kim and Pak [2], who demonstrated that perceived fairness is an important mechanism associated with the ability of exporting firms to respond to trade remedy measures. The finding concerning PGS is also consistent with recent evidence from Vietnam reported by Ha Nguyen Son and Hai Phan Thanh [20], which indicates that legal system quality, the effectiveness of dispute resolution mechanisms, and government support contribute to managers' trust, with government support representing one of the positive determinants of trust. These findings suggest that, in emerging economies, an active government role may be important not only for providing resources but also for signaling institutional commitment and reducing uncertainty for firms.

In contrast, PLC and DIQ did not have statistically significant direct effects on either PLE or TLS and did not generate significant indirect effects on FRR. This finding is noteworthy and may be interpreted as suggesting that legal clarity and information quality may function as enabling conditions whose associations depend on other institutional and organizational factors for generating proactive organizational responses. A regulation may be clearly formulated on paper without necessarily being perceived by firms as effective. Similarly, online information may be accurate, yet if firms do not perceive practical value in that information or lack confidence in the enforcement mechanisms, such information may

not translate into action. This finding differs to some extent from the e-government study by AlAwadhi et al. [17], in which information quality and system design influenced trust in e-government and subsequently behavioral intentions. The difference may reflect the specific nature of trade remedies. Trade remedy law is a specialized and relatively complex field that firms encounter infrequently and that requires more than information acquisition; firms also need the capacity to interpret legal provisions, assess their practical effectiveness, and mobilize resources to respond. The findings of Tran Viet and Phan Thanh [3], which show that managers' cognitive states and attitudes mediate firms' responses to trade remedies in Vietnam, further support the argument that external information or stimuli need to be internalized before they can translate into organizational behavior.

For LIA, the findings reveal a more nuanced mechanism. LIA did not have a statistically significant effect on PLE but significantly affected TLS, while the indirect path LIA $\rightarrow$ TLS $\rightarrow$ FRR was supported. This suggests that access to legal information may contribute to the development of trust before altering firms' assessments of legal effectiveness. When firms can conveniently, regularly, and transparently access official legal information, they may develop greater confidence that the legal system is transparent and reliable, even if access to information alone is insufficient to enable them to directly assess the actual effectiveness of trade remedy measures. This finding is broadly consistent with research on digital government, where the quality and accessibility of information are regarded as important components of users' interactions with regulatory systems and are associated with trust in public institutions [16, 17]. Nevertheless, the findings also indicate that "having information" should not be equated with "being prepared to respond." The present model suggests that legal information may contribute to FRR through assessments of effectiveness and trust, particularly in a complex regulatory domain such as trade remedies.

5.2. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

From a regulatory perspective, PLE should be regarded as the highest priority. The IPMA results indicate that PLE has the highest importance for FRR (0.578) while also achieving a relatively high performance level (72.162%). This suggests that regulatory authorities should not focus solely on introducing additional regulations but should instead demonstrate and strengthen the practical effectiveness of the trade remedy framework. Relevant measures may include shortening processing times, increasing procedural transparency, providing practical guidance, improving predictability, and ensuring that firms receive meaningful support when participating in trade remedy investigations. The findings concerning PGS also indicate the need to strengthen early-warning mechanisms, training, legal consultation, and technical assistance. Such measures are consistent with evidence from Vietnam showing that government support can encourage compliance and strengthen firms' trust in government institutions [21, 22].

For importing and exporting firms, the findings suggest that improving FRR should not begin simply with "knowing the law." Rather, firms need to develop the capacity to assess whether the legal framework is effective and trustworthy. Firms should establish mechanisms for regularly monitoring trade remedy cases, standardize accounting and trade data, systematically preserve relevant evidence, designate responsible legal contacts, and develop early-response procedures. This recommendation is also consistent with Kim and Pak [2], who emphasized the importance of organizational capabilities and managerial perceptions in strengthening firms' ability to respond to trade remedy measures.

For industry associations and organizations supporting businesses, the IPMA results indicate that PLE and TLS should receive greater attention than simply increasing the volume of disseminated information. Industry associations can serve as intermediaries by translating complex legal provisions into sector-specific guidance, frequently asked questions, early-warning notices, case-based materials, and practical training programs. In particular, mechanisms should be established to help firms verify information and interact effectively with regulatory authorities, thereby transforming LIA into TLS and, ultimately, into greater FRR.

Finally, for emerging economies, the findings suggest that policies designed to strengthen firms' capacity to respond to trade remedy measures should move beyond a conventional emphasis on lawmaking and information provision toward an integrated approach centered on legal effectiveness, trust, and response readiness. This implication extends beyond Vietnam. In institutional environments where firms' legal resources remain constrained, strengthening enforcement effectiveness, fairness, government support, and trust in the legal and enforcement system may generate greater practical value than simply increasing the volume of legal information. In other words, the IPMA results identify PLE as the most important leverage point and TLS as the next priority for improvement, whereas investments in PLC and DIQ may have limited effects on FRR if pursued in isolation without simultaneously improving the practical usefulness and effectiveness of the trade remedy framework. This interpretation is consistent with international evidence that trust is important for information exchange, cooperation, and compliance within regulatory systems [11, 23].

5.3. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study provides empirical evidence on the mechanisms underlying firms' response readiness to trade remedy measures, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study employed a cross-sectional design and self-reported data from one representative of each firm. Therefore, the identified relationships primarily reflect associations among the constructs at a single point in time and do not establish causal relationships or temporal ordering. In particular, perceptions of legal effectiveness, trust, and response readiness may change when firms actually face a trade remedy investigation. Second, the sample comprised 425 firms in Vietnam; therefore, the generalizability of the findings to other countries, industries, or institutional environments should be considered with caution. Firms' exposure to trade remedies may also differ substantially across manufacturing, exporting, and importing firms and across industries with different levels of exposure to trade remedy actions. Third, the study focuses primarily on perceptions of the legal and institutional environment, whereas internal firm capabilities, such as financial resources, legal expertise, data management capabilities, experience in handling trade remedy cases, and innovation capabilities, were not incorporated into the model. Finally, although the SOR framework provides a coherent explanation of the cognitive-to-response process, some measurement items were adapted from different streams of research and should therefore be further validated in other trade remedy contexts to strengthen their measurement validity and generalizability.

These limitations also provide several directions for future research. First, future studies could employ longitudinal designs, particularly by following firms before, during, and after trade remedy investigations, to better capture changes in legal perceptions, trust, and response readiness over time. Second, future research could extend the sample to multiple emerging economies or conduct cross-country studies to examine whether the proposed S-O-R mechanism remains consistent across different legal and institutional systems. Third, multi-group analysis, such as PLS-MGA, could be used to compare manufacturing, exporting, and importing firms, or firms that have and have not previously faced trade remedy investigations, thereby identifying differences in the mechanisms underlying FRR. Fourth, future studies could extend the model by incorporating legal capability, digital capability, data analytics capability, trade remedy experience, and risk management capability as potential moderators or mediators rather than focusing exclusively on firms' perceptions. Finally, given the increasing digitalization of trade governance, future research should examine more closely the roles of artificial intelligence, early-warning systems, digital legal information platforms, and trade data analytics in translating legal perceptions and trust into actual response capabilities. These approaches could not only validate and extend the present model but also move trade remedy research beyond the question of "how firms perceive the legal environment" toward a deeper understanding of "how firms actually prepare and act in response to trade remedy risks".

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined how firms' perceptions of trade remedy law are associated with their readiness to respond to trade remedy measures in Vietnam through the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework, using survey data from 425 managers and business owners representing importing and exporting firms in Vietnam. The findings indicate that perceived legal effectiveness (PLE) is the most important factor, with positive effects on both trust in the legal and enforcement system (TLS) and firms' response readiness (FRR). TLS also makes a significant contribution to FRR. Among the external stimuli, perceived legal fairness (PLF), perceived government support (PGS), and legal information accessibility (LIA) exert significant effects through the proposed cognitive mechanisms, whereas perceived legal clarity (PLC) and digital legal information quality (DIQ) do not show statistically significant effects.

Overall, the findings suggest that strengthening Firms' Response Readiness (FRR) does not depend solely on introducing clear regulations or providing more legal information. More importantly, firms need to perceive the legal framework as effective and develop sufficient trust in the legal and enforcement system. Accordingly, regulatory authorities should prioritize enforcement effectiveness, procedural fairness, support for firms, and institutional trust. These findings provide empirical evidence for strengthening Vietnamese firms' capacity to respond to trade remedy measures and offer potentially relevant insights for other emerging economies with high levels of international trade integration.

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Author Contributions

Both authors contributed equally to the study and approved the final version of the manuscript.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Data Availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

APPENDIX A. SURVEY ITEM CONSTRUCTS

Table 9. *Survey Constructs, Measurement Items, and Supporting Sources*

Construct	Statement	Source
PLC	Perceived Legal Clarity (PLC)	
PLC1	Regulations and procedures within trade remedy laws (anti-dumping, countervailing/anti-subsidy, and safeguards) are promulgated clearly and coherently.	Kim and Pak [2]; Tran Viet and Phan Thanh [3]; Dimitras et al. [7]; Grimmelikhuijsen et al. [8]; Expert opinion.
PLC2	Legal guidelines on calculating dumping and subsidy margins, as well as determining injury, are comprehensible to enterprises.	
PLC3	The rights and obligations of enterprises during trade remedy investigations are clearly stipulated and easily identifiable.	
PLC4	The standards and bases for applying trade remedy measures are consistent, lacking contradictions or overlaps.	
PLF	Perceived Legal Fairness (PLF)	
PLF1	Trade remedy investigation and settlement procedures are conducted objectively and transparently.	Kappler et al. [11]; Kim and Pak [2]; Expert opinion.
PLF2	My enterprise is afforded equal opportunities to provide information and data, and to protect its legitimate interests.	
PLF3	Investigation conclusions and trade remedy rulings are based on factual evidence and are impartial.	
PLF4	Trade remedy laws ensure equitable treatment between domestic enterprises and importing/exporting enterprises.	
LIA	Legal Information Accessibility (LIA)	
LIA1	My enterprise can easily access legal documents and regulatory guidelines regarding trade remedies as required.	Harding and Keeling [15], Virkar et al. [13]; Chang [14]; Expert opinion.
LIA2	Information channels regarding trade remedy cases and rulings are widely disseminated to the business community.	
LIA3	The cost and time required to access trade remedy-related legal information and documents are reasonable.	
LIA4	My enterprise consistently receives early notifications/warnings regarding the risks of trade remedy investigations from export markets.	
DIQ	Digital Legal Information Quality (DIQ)	
DIQ1	Trade remedy legal information on electronic portals/digital platforms is updated in a timely and accurate manner.	Ye et al. [16]; Kim and Pak [2]; AlAwadhi et al. [17]; Nam et al. [19]; Expert opinion.
DIQ2	Digital data regarding trade remedy laws and cases is highly comprehensive and accurately fulfills the retrieval needs of enterprises.	
DIQ3	Digitized trade remedy information is presented systematically, and is easy to search, download, and utilize.	
DIQ4	Digital platforms provide practical support tools (e.g., HS code lookup, preliminary duty calculation, declaration forms).	
PGS	Perceived Government Support (PGS)	
PGS1	State management agencies regularly organize training and consulting programs to enhance the trade remedy capacity of enterprises.	Kim and Pak [2]; Tran Viet and Phan Thanh [3]; Ha Nguyen Son and Hai Phan Thanh [20]; Thanh Tung and Tien Thanh [22]; Expert opinion.
PGS2	The State implements timely support policies (e.g., legal consultation, policy dialogues) when enterprises encounter trade remedy investigations in foreign markets.	
PGS3	The early warning system for trade remedy risks operated by relevant authorities functions effectively and holds high reference value.	
PGS4	My enterprise receives active coordination and protection of its interests from regulatory authorities in the event of international trade disputes.	
PLE	Perceived Legal Effectiveness (PLE)	
PLE1	The current trade remedy legal system effectively protects domestic industries against unfair competition.	Kappler et al. [11], Verhoest et al. [23]; Na et al. [24]; Expert opinion.
PLE2	Trade remedy sanctions and regulations exert a strong deterrent effect on origin fraud and dumping practices.	
PLE3	The enforcement of trade remedy laws contributes to maintaining a healthy business and international trade environment.	
PLE4	The trade remedy legal framework establishes a solid foundation for enterprises to protect themselves within global value chains.	
TLS	Trust in the Legal and Enforcement System (TLS)	
TLS1	Enterprises trust the integrity and impartiality of the trade remedy legal system.	Maman et al. [25]; Kappler et al. [11]; Grimmelikhuijsen et al. [8]; Expert opinion.
TLS2	Enterprises believe that trade remedy regulatory and enforcement agencies possess the requisite professional capacity to handle complex cases.	
TLS3	Enterprises trust that compliance with trade remedy laws yields long-term benefits and safeguards the business.	
TLS4	Trade remedy enforcement agencies consistently act to protect the legitimate rights and interests of the business community.	
FRR	Firms' Response Readiness (FRR)	
FRR1	My enterprise has assigned personnel or established a dedicated department to monitor and handle legal and trade remedy matters.	Kim and Pak [2]; Tran Viet and Phan Thanh [3]; Ha Nguyen Son and Hai Phan Thanh [20]; Expert opinion.
FRR2	My enterprise maintains accounting records, documentation, and traceability data that meet international standards, ensuring readiness for provision during an investigation.	
FRR3	My enterprise has a budget contingency plan and is prepared to hire professional lawyers/legal counsel should a trade remedy case arise.	
FRR4	My enterprise proactively develops strategies to diversify export markets and raw material supply chains to mitigate trade remedy risks.	
FRR5	My enterprise actively participates in industry associations to collaborate and share resources in responding to trade remedy lawsuits.	

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